

NEGRO FOLKLORE FROM SOUTH PHILADELPHIA,

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R.D.A.

## INTRODUCTION

What is being attempted in this study is to present a corpus of lore collected from a small group of Negroes from South Philadelphia and to relate it to their lives in a number of different ways. The object will be to cast as much light on the lore as possible, utilizing when necessary the findings and methods of a number of disciplines.

Though the most important part of this study is the presentation of the lore itself, a few introductory chapters have been included to place the lore in as full a context as possible, and to provide some of the meanings of the lore which might remain submerged but for this special kind of analysis. One of the necessities in such a scheme is to give a brief social history of the Negro in this country, and especially the migrant group which has drifted to the North. This will be done, not so much with events or figures or charts, but with a discussion of the psychological and sociological problems inherent in a group often discriminated against, submerged in poverty, and possessing a family structure that, at many points, deviates from middle-class norms, both white and Negro. As is fitting, the discussion will progress, whenever possible, through the problems as expressed in the lore. This is, after all, primarily a discussion of the lore of a group, and only secondarily an anatomy of the social and psychological problems.

The following chapters will be concerned with some of the special problems posed by the existence of the lore itself. The second chapter is about the growing ability of the Negro with words, the ways in which this ability is used, and the patterns into which they are channeled.

This growth will be examined by tracing a growth in the complexity of verbal forms, and by considering the psychological effects of words upon their users and their audience. The third chapter attacks somewhat the same problems from a different position. Rather than discussing the psychological implications of this development of verbal dexterity and the consequent manner of expression caused by this growth, the subject matter of the narratives is considered in an attempt to analyze why the performers of this group talk in the terms that they do, and in what way the stories which they tell guide their future actions. In other words, the narratives are analyzed as a mirror of the minds of its performers.

Thus, in the early chapters as much background material, 'cultural context,' as possible will be utilized in order to illuminate the structure and function of the lore. As certain groups of the lore illustrate precise problems, further analysis of such matters will be carried on in the shorter introductions to those sections. For the most part, however, any discussion after that of the opening chapters will be of a comparative folkloristic nature.

In transcribing my texts I decided not to attempt to capture the dialect through strange spellings. I did not do this because I do not feel there is any working middle-ground between literary English and the phonemic transcriptions utilized so fruitfully by the anthropologist. It has always seemed unfortunate that Negro lore has been strangely contorted by orthographic shenanigans. I have used standard English spellings throughout, except where a change was so strong and characteristic that to change it would have been to change the nature of the material. Thus I have printed what sounded like "doin" as "doing" because this is the

way the Negro would read it from the written page. On the other hand when he said "I'ma" instead of "I'm going to" I have transcribed it in the former way because not to do so would have been to destroy the rhythm. This is perhaps an indefensible position, but the problem is a difficult one. I have partially solved the problem by including a phonemic transcription of a characteristic toast, supplied to me graciously by Earl Rand of the University of Texas in order to give at least one faithful transcription of the speech of this group. The only real solution would have been to include such transcriptions of all of the material, at least the narratives, for though this piece is characteristic, it is performed by the most theatrical of my informants, and those given by others are quite different. I am unfortunately not equipped to do such a job, and could not ask such assistance of anyone who could.

At times, my scholarly apparatus has proved to be somewhat cumbersome, as my headnotes, included as they are, before each piece of lore interrupt the continuity of the material. I felt however that the advantages of the headnote system far outweighed the disadvantages, in relating the collected lore to similar pieces in this and in other collections.

This study arose unexpectedly, and almost in spite of itself. As a folklorist, I am always looking for examples of folk-literature. But as a member of the practitioners of this discipline I did not expect to find much folklore in the middle of a big city. Perhaps one might bump into the ethnic remains of an immigrant culture, or the last vestiges



of a peasant tradition brought the cities by the migration from the farms. It was a great and happy surprise then, that I was able to find in the middle of Philadelphia, the fourth largest city in the United States, the variety of folk-expression which is set forth here.

Undoubtedly I would never have unearthed this material if I had not moved to 421 S. Iseminger Street, Philadelphia 47, Pennsylvania. This is in the midst of an interesting neighborhood called by some of its members "Camingerly", the name being a combination of the street names, Camac, Waverly, and Iseminger. (The name was adopted by the white members of the community and never attained much use. I have used it here because it is the best shorthand way I could think of to talk of the neighborhood.) It consists of two types of dwellings: four- and five-story tenements and little three-story, four-room houses built between 1790 and 1830 and known affectionately by those who have lived around them as 'Father, Son and Holy Ghost' houses. They are so-called because their usual construction is just three rooms, one on top of the other, with a winding stairwell in the corner of the room, and a small shed-kitchen on the back of the first floor room.

These houses were built on the small back-streets for which Philadelphia is so well-known, and served as servants' quarters for the large town-houses to be found on the broader streets, Pine and Locust, Spruce and Broad. <sup>4</sup>Ths, many of these houses have always (until recent rehabilitation) served as residences for Negroes. When I moved onto this street, in September of 1958, it was still inhabited primarily by Negroes, and it was from these good neighbors that I was able to collect the folklore in the following pages.

When I first moved onto Iseminger Street I did think that I might perhaps encounter some blues singers or street musicians, and I had my eyes and ears open for such. At the time, one of my Negro neighbors, Bobby Lewis, was helping tear down and patch up my house. He was constantly singing, but rock-and-roll songs and others productions of that sort. He was distinctly discouraging about prospects of finding street-musicians (counseling which proved correct). Another neighbor told me that Bobby wrote a lot of songs himself, and kiddingly he told me that there was one special one that he thought I would like, about a Negro stoker called "Shine." He told me this because he knew the work used a lot of 'dirty' words and he thought I might be amusingly shocked. I confronted Bobby with a request for this piece, and after much ado, denials, giggling and other such maneuvers he performed the piece for me. I had been led to expect a song, but what I got instead was the first 'toast' I had ever heard; the story of "Shine," the Negro stoker who is supposed to have been the only man to have survived the sinking of the Titanic.

I was, to say the least, not amused, but excited, for here undoubtedly was a piece of folklore in a form I had never encountered before. Bobby, thinking perhaps that he might achieve some sort of fame through the piece, persisted on claiming that he wrote it. It was not for a month or two after, that he would admit he had learned it from the narration of a number of his friends and that there were a number of other 'toasts' which were to be heard, but that he did not know. As many of these pieces are both of a racial and sexual character, Bobby was hesitant to lead me to other toast-tellers. It was fully five

months after first hearing "The Titanic" that I finally heard another, "Stackolee," from the ace of toast-tellers, "Kid" Mike.

By this time I had become known and at least partially trusted by my Negro neighbors. In talking to some of the older members of the community, I realized that there was indeed a wealth of folklore to be garnered right around my own front door. This became even more obvious while watching the children at play, performing the many different games common among them. In order, however, to find the time for such a project, I realized that I would have to get the permission of Professors MacEdward Leach and Tristram Coffin to pursue this with the possibility of expanding it into a dissertation. Consequently I transcribed the material that I had collected on tape and showed it to them. From the beginning I got nothing but the greatest possible encouragement from them.

I then proceeded to collect with a purpose. Bobby Lewis became even more helpful than before, as he not only kept introducing me to possible informants, but he easily mastered the workings of my tape-recorder and he made a number of forays into the field, going places and getting material which I never would have had a chance to encounter. Of course, the tapes when I played them back after his 'field trips' contained more singing of prospective girl-friends who wanted to hear themselves than folklore of any kind, but the legitimate material which he did return with was worth any of the severe editorial pains involved.

My neighbors were quite quick in recognizing the kind of material for which I was searching. I simply told them that I was writing a 'book' about the things that they had learned from their parents, family or

friends, by word-of-mouth and not from T.V., books, records and especially not from teacher. They were, for the most part, excited by the project and wanted to get their names in the book for contributing some sort of piece. The children would occasionally try to record something learned in school, but due to the desire of the others to do recording, someone would immediately yell, "No! You learned that in school." Everyone was amazed by the project, for they couldn't understand who would want to read such a book.

One group, however, the youths, were extremely suspicious. These were the boys who were telling me the 'dozens' rhymes and the toasts. Because of the nature of some of this material, they were convinced that I was going to make a small fortune on this sort of book, and they were not sure that they wanted to pad my pocket. There was no real argument against such thoughts, so most of the material from this age group was collected by fairly devious means.

The word began to spread around the neighborhood that I had a tape-recorder. One of the primary and most constructive manners in which the youths occupy their time around there was to sing in quartets. For the most part these groups write their own songs or occasionally sing songs which are popular rock-and-roll records. Many of these groups had a great desire to hear what they sounded like, and on the suggestion of Bobby, came over and had me record them. In this way I became acquainted with many of my best informants, and was able to collect material which I would not otherwise have been able to obtain, for now they felt that I was giving them something in return.

In all of this, I was fortunate in having a very patient wife who understood exactly what I was trying to do, and whenever a group came to the house was quick to provide refreshments, and equally quick to retire when the recording began, even though she was just as eager to hear what was going on as I. Through her, I was able to establish the house as a sort of center where someone could drop in and always find welcome. Many an evening five or six dropped in to talk, and as often as not, no recording would be done that night (there is more than one anecdote, tale, conversation that I would like to have captured). Sometimes, however, someone would arrive who would say, "I learned a new toast," or "You wanna hear some jokes?" and out the recorder would come.

Once, the problem of wifely understanding and conviviality got a little out of hand. I was not at home one evening when Bobby and two others came over. My wife ushered them in, showed Bobby where the tape-recorder was, delivered the refreshments (as these were adults, a bottle of vodka) and politely retired. When she came back in about half an hour to find out if more ice was needed, she found that the bottle had been completely consumed and the men more than inebriated. Fortunately, they were complete gentlemen and realizing that they were not in complete control of themselves, they ceremoniously left. Needless to say, that kind of evening was never repeated, but the tape they left behind contained some of the best material in this collection.

This was not the only sort of problem that arose during our residence on Iseminger Street. The children of the neighborhood were perhaps the most eager to be included in this collection, and we could expect on any day to receive two or three taps on the door, with little pig-tailed or

shaven heads peeking in through the mail-slot or crevice in the door, asking if we were "having any company?" This meant that some child wanted to hear himself on the recorder, or simply that he was bored and wanted to poke around the house helping my wife to make dinner, or to watch television. Most of the time the children would come in threes or fours (or more), and they would vie to see who could think up more jump-rope rhymes or different ways of playing jacks. Once early in the process of collection, after one of these visits, I heard a stern rapping at the door and descended to find an irate mother who did not know me personally and accused me, mostly by innuendo, of all sorts of possible heinous crimes in relation to her child. I told her what I had been doing and offered to show her my manuscripts, but she went away unmollified. Others in the neighborhood must have explained to her about my work, for two or three months later her daughters once again joined the steady stream at our door.

But this is just to talk about the successful collection. Unfortunately the failures easily equalled the successes. Perhaps the most prominent among the failures was the case of James Douglas, a man who worked across the street at the Morris Animal Home. Douglas (as all called him) was a well-spoken man, extremely intelligent, proud of his education (completed high school, had a 'profession,' mechanic), and a veritable store-house of folklore. What is more, from the very first time I explained to him what I was attempting to do, he understood completely. However, he decided he was going to have some fun about the whole affair, so consequently he would think up the most tempting bit of lore and whenever he would see me without my notebook, he would casually saunter over to

me and rattle it off. Yet when he saw me with my notebook he would run off laughing. Not even the ruse of carrying a small notebook would work, because when he saw me start to get it out, he would start rattling off so many things at once that I would be unable to remember most of them. This was a grand kind of joke, causing the denizens of the street to get a big laugh at me, as they sat around in their customary seats, their portable chairs.

'Blood,' one of the finest toast-tellers would do the same thing. For instance, he knew that I had been actively searching for someone who knew a good complete text of the toast about the James Brothers. One evening, he sauntered over, took a deep breath and delivered a marvelously full text that lasted for fully ten minutes, tipped his hat and paraded down the street. He knew at least ten others of the same calibre, but he never recorded one for me. I heard that if I were willing to pay him \$5.00 (he had heard wrongly that I had paid one of my informants) he would record for me.

Early in the period in which I was collecting I found that as soon as I went more than two blocks away from the area in which I was known, I ran into a stone wall. To many Negroes in this section of Philadelphia, a white man is either a policeman or a bill-collector. Thus it is that all of the material in this collection was gathered from within two city blocks of the house on Iseminger Street. I never went farther east than 12th Street, farther north than Pine, farther south than South Street and farther west than Juniper. I frequently was able to collect from some who lived farther away, but only when they were with people I already knew and had collected from. In this way, I am fairly certain that this collection

is representative of the lore of all lower class Negro culture in Philadelphia, and I hope that any limitations that might have been imposed by this lack of breadth has been ameliorated by the collection in depth.

In many ways I have had either to violate or ignore traditional collecting practices. Sometimes, I have had so much material thrown at me at one time that I have not at that time been able to record the name of the informant. It would have been impossible for me to fully record the players of many of the games, but much of the other material which must remain without any name attached was given to me in the midst of some sort of gathering in which so much lore was to be recorded that I feel fortunate to have gotten as much of it as I have. Whenever I have taken down anything on tape, I have recorded the name of the informant as well as the date. This was not always possible with the material collected for me by Bobby. I hope that the life sketches included in the appendix will be sufficient to indicate the sort of people from whom the lore was collected. After each piece of lore, where possible, I will indicate the informant by number. The numbers will refer to those in the capsule biographies included in the very back of the book. There is enough homogeneity among the members of the neighborhood, that I think they are representative stories.

As indicated, I did not have any standard collecting procedure. Much of the lore collected was done with a notebook, from recitation, and in the case of much children's material, observation. It was hard to stop in the middle of a conversation to jot down a proverbial phrase or expression, but I occasionally did this, if I felt I would not be insulting the person to whom I was talking. Many, especially Eula, Bobby's grandmother,



used such interesting language that she got used to me jotting as we talked, and would even think of similar expressions if she saw that she had used one that I had taken down. Most of the tape-recorded material was done in my own house, though as mentioned Bobby did make a few successful forays with it. Furthermore, I did receive some material in typewritten form from an informant who would have heard something that he thought I would like and had it copied. Only once did I find someone who carried a typewritten sheet with him in his wallet. I also received a manuscript of typescript, but the majority of the material contained in it was obviously literary in inspiration.

I have made an attempt to take down every element of traditional lore that I have encountered. In a few instances this was impossible. I could not possibly include all of the jokes, anecdotes that I ran into, and have therefore included what I consider both most significant and most typical. Most of them are concerned with sexual exploits. Of these, I have only included a representative sample.

Only once can I remember allowing my moral scruples to overcome my objective folkloristic interest in collecting all traditional lore possible. This was while collecting the hand-clapping game "Oh Vee, Cha Cha Cha" from a group of adolescent girls, and one girl began a rhyme after much hesitation and prodding that in effect would have burned the ears off of the Devil, and I had to ask her to stop it before I betrayed my consternation in other fashions.

Probably the greatest pitfall to the attempt to make a wholly representative collection was the natural tendency to search for specific items rather than recording whatever lore I happened to encounter. For

instance, when I realized that a good number of the old "preacher tales" were still making the rounds, I actively searched for them. Thus, the anecdotes and tales section may seem overweighted with them, when in fact they are only one of a number of series of such stories that are told by the Camingerly Negro. They are, in subject and language, typical, so I have included them, and not others. I would never have encountered riddles had I not actively searched for them. They do not play the large part in the life of the Negro of this neighborhood today, and thus were, for the most part, collected from people twenty-five years or older who remembered them from their Southern childhood.

Another notable gap in the collection that will be noticed is the lack of traditional songs. This is not because I am not interested in songs, or even that I did not search for them actively, for I have described already my efforts to find street-singers. The song of the Negro has always presented great problems to the folklorist. The blues is, for instance, a traditional form, and has a distinguishable traditional manner of performance, but most blues to be collected are written by individuals and do not change much in the process of transmission (often because the recording is the major means of that transmission.) Yet a song when performed in traditional style and form, especially in a group like the Negro that values the song as improvisation as much as composition, must be considered as folksong. Neither the country blues, nor the more widely accepted Negro spiritual is still flourishing in this urban group. Occasionally groups come along that perform one or the other of these forms, but they don't have the approbation they once had. To explain why would be to write the social history of these people, and I have

neither time nor inclination for the job. It should be noted, however, that forms have arisen out of the blues and spiritual that are very lively today, and do have the acceptance of the community. I am talking of rock-and-roll and gospel singing. Nearly anyone who can "carry a tune" belongs to some singing group singing rock-and-roll and/or gospel songs. As with the blues, the performers in many cases create their own songs, and arrangements. We still have the same emphasis, then, on improvisation within basic structures. But now the forms are more complex, and the problems more complicated because if one includes these songs as 'folk' we can no longer make a distinction between folk and popular song. Rather than enter into a possible argument over the inclusion of such materials, I have chosen not to include songs of this nature here simply because of the extensive musical equipment it would have taken to do so. I have numerous recordings of local groups writing, practicing, arranging and performing such material for those who wish to hear it. To my mind it is not only a valid "folk" expression, but perhaps the most exciting and creative of all those of this group. In saying this, I am aware of the problems involved.

Perhaps the greatest problem I had with this work was not the ones of classification, but that of time. This collection, by its nature, forced me to collect from a lot of very interesting people, and in doing so it brought out the worst part of my nature--the desire to sit around "jawing." In the long run, I can't help feeling that these "wasted" hours paid off, in terms of friendship, if nothing else.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE NEIGHBORHOOD

A person who has grown up in a middle-class environment, who moves into a neighborhood of Negroes in South Philadelphia, travels almost, as it were, into another country in many ways. There is such a great disparity between the middle-class white and the lower-class Negro in attitudes, values, expression, family structure, and a great many other cultural phenomena. Indeed, life in middle-class Europe would seem less strange.

In order to understand the folklore of such a group, it becomes necessary (as is true of every group) to relate it to the cultural complex, what we might call the folkways, of that people. In hopes of doing this, I have directed the following observations and remarks.

#### I

#### The Concept of the Family--The Matriarchy

Probably the greatest single distinguishing feature of Negro life in South Philadelphia is the importance of the mother in the family unit. In the first place, a great majority of the women in the neighborhood are either not married or not cohabiting with a man on a regular basis. Thus the women not only have to assume all of the usual motherly roles of cooking, keeping house, providing the warmth of the family, but also those usually associated with fathers, i.e., discipline and providing income. Even in the homes in which there was a man living with a woman, the mother seems to have assumed most of these roles.

This is not an unusual situation among Negroes in this country.

Similar family units have been noted by every sociological study made of lower-class Negro groups.

The...major differences between Negro family organization and that of the white majority touches on the position of woman when compared to that of the man, in terms of common American convention, that the adjective "matriarchal" has come to be employed in recent years when describing this family type.<sup>1</sup>

In the lower socio-economic groups the family is more often dominated by the woman than man.<sup>2</sup>

This system has existed since early slavery, and because of modern hiring practices, social attitudes, and methods of obtaining relief from the state, will remain until these social ills are cured. The Negro woman is capable of earning a more regular income than is the man. Even though factory work has opened new areas in which unskilled Negro males may get employment, it is still very difficult for the average man to get a steady job without some sort of special training. Often when special training is obtained through vocational schools it goes to waste because of a color line drawn by some unions. Most of the men in the neighborhood do odd jobs to earn living money. The younger men often are able to get seasonal jobs, such as working for four or five months in the spring at a factory in Camden assembling outdoor summer furniture. Many people, both men and women, during harvest season take the farm busses out to pick crops, which

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<sup>1</sup>Herskovits, Melville J., The Myth of the Negro Past, Boston, 1958, reprint, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup>Johnson, Charles S., Growing Up in the Black Belt, Wash., D. C., 1941, p. 58.

though it pays poorly, has the advantage of the 'kindness' of the farmers who hand out damaged, unmarketable produce to the pickers, and they sell it to their neighbors.

Women, on the other hand, can get domestic work any time they wish. If they take vocational, commercial training in high school there is no difficulty in getting a good secretarial job on graduation. Even with only a partial high school education, some companies will take colored girls as clerks. If a girl has a child, custom provides that she can always find someone to care for it, her mother or some other older woman, if she cares to continue to work. If she doesn't the state will pay her a subsistence allowance for herself and each child; that is, if she has no man 'living' with her, or providing visible support for the children. Thus, the women of the community can regard themselves as financially independent in one way or another.

It is not surprising then that under such a system a woman hesitates to marry, except where she can be sure, in some way, that the man she marries will be able to provide for her better than she can do for herself. Furthermore, because of a natural bias (perhaps inherited from farm life) that having children is beneficial (to provide in old age is the rationale often given) plus the incentive provided by state relief laws, most of the children in the neighborhood are born out of wedlock.

A variety of explanations have been devised for this family system throughout the United States. Herskovits, who tends to relate all things Negro back to Africa, makes some interesting observations upon the unusual function of the mother in West African societies. In summation he says:

It cannot be regarded as only coincidence that such specialized features of Negro family life in the United States as the role of women in focusing the sentiment that gives the family unit its psychological coherence, or their place in maintaining the economic stability essential to survival, correspond closely to similar facets of West African social structure. And this becomes more apparent when we investigate the inner aspects of the family structure of Negroes in the New World outside the United States. Though everywhere the father has his place, the tradition of the father as sole or principal provider essential to the European pattern is deviated from.<sup>3</sup>

Even he qualifies his statements on these matters, however:

As in the case of most other aspects of Negro life, the problem becomes one of evaluating multiple forces rather than placing reliance on simpler explanations. From the point of view of the search for Africanisms, the status of the Negro family at present is thus to be regarded as the result of the play of various forces in the New World experience of the Negro, projected against a background of aboriginal tradition. Slavery did not cause the "maternal" family; but it tended to continue certain elements in the cultural endowment brought to the New World by the Negroes. The feeling between mother and children was reinforced when the father was sold away from the rest of the family...<sup>4</sup>

Many other commentators relate the problem to the social situation under slavery.

Under the slave system, the Negro woman frequently enjoyed a status superior to that of the man...In the lower class family today a pattern similar to that of the slavery period persists.<sup>5</sup>

The standard study of the subject is E. Franklin Frazier's The Negro Family in the United States.<sup>6</sup> He, too, speaks of the effects of the slave

<sup>3</sup>Herskovits, op. cit., p. 180.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 181.

<sup>5</sup>Johnson, op. cit., 58-59.

<sup>6</sup>Frazier, E. Franklin, The Negro Family in the United States, Chicago, 1939.

system upon the Negro family. Women were more highly valued on a plantation, he tells us, because of their breeding capacities, and their ability to perform most of the same jobs as the men (especially during harvest). The Negro, further, could not marry legally because to do so would have been to give them legal rights, which they did not otherwise have. As breeding, the production of more slaves, was desirable, the slave owners encouraged free sexual habits among their chattels, while denying them the benefit of marriage vows. They were even known to increase the Negro population by the addition of their own seed (though this practice is perhaps overstressed by critics of the South).

As Frazier brings out, nothing since the liberation of the slaves has militated to change the social system which was formulated under it. As a matter of fact, much of the father-dominated family life that was fostered then was eliminated by social forces after the Civil War. Suddenly at the end of that period, the Negroes found themselves freed, but without employment, any means of livelihood. Many were able to either sharecrop or to buy or rent land. This group, though to some extent mother-oriented, has more of the basic pattern of European family life.

On the other hand, for a large group "As the old order crumbled, thousands of Negro men and women began to wander aimlessly about the country or in search of adventure and work in army camps and cities."<sup>7</sup> This group grew each time there was any reason, drought or depression, that drove the agricultural Negro from his land, especially during the periods after 1879 and 1929. With the opening of new factories during the industrial expansion,

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.



many Negroes came north in search of industrial jobs. This caused a constant stream of colored workers northward, and the whole process was greatly encouraged during the period of man-power shortage of World War II that created new jobs for them where they had never been able to find employment before.

This migration usually went from farm to lumber or turpentine camps<sup>8</sup> or railroad gangs to the towns or cities. There was a large dispossessed class of people that wandered about the country looking for whatever work they could find. As in any similar class, idleness, poverty and the tensions that surrounded these problems, prevailed. The dispossessed, developing upon the lack of balanced family life (functional in the earlier slave society) formed new attitudes in relations with each other, especially in regards to sex and crime and violence. The anonymity afforded by the migrant nature of their lives gave them an almost complete freedom from social controls within their own ranks.<sup>9</sup>

The older members of the Camingerly neighborhood were actors in this great social drama; the younger members children of it. Of all of the dwellers in the area above middle age, only Harry had been born in Philadelphia. Many of the younger members, as well as the older, were born on

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<sup>8</sup>For a marvelous picture of the turpentine camps and their folklore see Hurston, Zora Neale, Mules and Men.

<sup>9</sup>As Sterling Brown has pointed out in Folksay (1930) ed. by Ben C. Botkin, p. 324-39, the blues was the natural expression of these people. Paul Oliver, (The Blues Fell This Morning, London, 1960) has recently taken blues texts and shown how they documented the life and struggle of this class. Frazier attempts to explain this sudden emotional eruption as "an awakening of the (romantic) imagination which contrasts sharply with the unromantic attitudes of the peasant Negro toward sex and mating in the isolated rural communities of the South."

farms in the South. Some such as Sam Stogie, had seen all of the varieties of experience that were available to him during his long life. He had been born on a farm and worked there on and off for many years. He had worked in lumber camps, turpentine camps, as a stevadore, a railroad line worker, etc. Others tell the same story.<sup>10</sup>

The women came when the men sent for them; they and their families. Eula came that way from North Carolina, with her first child. Eugenia Jackson came with her husband Charlie, a blind street singer, playing the streets from Georgia to Chicago and finally settled in Philadelphia. Gladys came when she was ten with her father, who had been a farmer in Virginia and who came north to find work when he lost the farm. With them came their attitude toward the family, unhappily heightened, decayed by life in the city.

Because the woman has the greatest financial independence among the group, she tends to develop a personality that is positive, forthright, aware of her superior position. She knows that she is, in many ways, in command of the male, and in many instances she expresses it by enticement and disdain. The male Negro seems to know that the only way that he is going to master a potential mate is to appeal to his superior physical powers. Most of the time, the expression of this is simply through 'big talk,' through boasting (and this is done in front of other men for the most part, not the women). The women, as they can not achieve any sort of conjugal love because of the poor financial condition of the men, look only

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<sup>10</sup> See page 401 for life histories of all those mentioned here.

for a 'love' through sexual satisfaction. The most valued kind of providence then is potency. Perhaps for this reason so many of the stories, jokes, toasts, are concerned with the sexual feats of the man. Kid says, only half-kiddingly:

Yeah, I'm fast. I'm so fast, a girl told me one time, she said, "Kid, now if you can get some cock 'fore my mother get back home, and she's coming 'round the corner right now, you can have it." So I said, "Lay down." She laid down, I pushed the light switch, got undressed, jumped in bed, busted two nuts, got dressed and got outside the room before that room got dark.

Though this kind of boasting is rarely done in front of the women, an equally overt, but not quite as raw, verbal byplay has developed. The male makes some kind of 'smart' overture which is either ignored or answered in equally 'smart' but negative terms. Cleverness and strength of language becomes an end in itself, because the woman is asking the man to prove his masculinity and he can do so only by a defensive use of language or action.

Bobby, from time to time, concerned with my apparent ineptness with the opposite sex, would give me long lectures on how one had to 'deal rough' with women. He would say, "You go over to a who's house (any woman is a who') and say 'lookahere, bitch, when I say jump you jump, 'cause I didn't come here to fool around. I come for business.' If she gives you lip, just smack her one and she'll mind you." Although in the case of Bobby, the 'smacking' never occurred because his words were almost always much bigger than his deeds, in many other cases actual physical violence is the only way that the man can finally subdue the woman, 'put her in her place.' The bruises, even scars, that result are worn proudly.

As a woman gets older, much of this domineering attitude is transferred to the raising of her children. Before she is ready, however, to

resign, even temporarily, this sexual byplay, she may have many children. As children tend to restrict her activities to some degree, she often will give them to some older person to raise. This person is often her own mother or some other older relative experienced in the job of rearing. This grandmother-figure is in effect the center of the Negro concept of family.

The Negro grandmother's importance is due to the fact not only that she has been the "oldest head in a maternal family organization but also her position as 'granny' or midwife among a simple peasant" folk. As the repository of folk-wisdom concerning the inscrutable ways of nature, the grandmother has been depended upon by mothers to ease the pains of childbirth and ward off the dangers of ill luck.<sup>11</sup>

This is especially true in rural society. It is a situation that once again probably comes from the slavery system, for it was the 'granny' who raised not only her own children, but often many of the young of the other younger Negroes who were needed in the fields or in the house, and in many other cases, the children of their owners.

Eula, though a city-dweller most of her life, retains many of the aspects of the 'granny.' She had thirteen children of her own, and many of these have at one time or another sent some of their children to be raised by her. At the time we were neighbors, she had three of her children living with her. She also had two children of another daughter with her permanently, plus numerous others that would come for a short stay. Her household was in constant flux, because two of the daughters only lived there part of the time. The boys she had raised often came to see her, to bring

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<sup>11</sup>Frazier, op. cit., p. 153.

her presents and to help her keep her house in good repair (something in which she took great pride).<sup>12</sup> Even with children not living with her, she regarded it as within her province to teach them manners, good habits, etc. She was looked to by many of her female neighbors as a great help in controlling their children, and as the person to go to to find out what to do in case of sickness or emergency. In any questionable decision, however, she tried not to 'meddle in other people's business.'<sup>13</sup>

She is an extremely forthright, positive woman, having channeled her impulses into her dominant relationship with her family and neighbors. Naturally any woman who is in an equally dominant role will react to her negatively, and this was true of many of the women in the neighborhood. Foremost of these was Eugenia Jackson, a 'granny' herself in many respects.

Eugenia had lived two doors from Eula but had moved further down the street before the time that we moved into the area. She is the mother of a number of children and grandmother of many. She was obviously an extremely strong family woman from the stories she tells and from the letters and support she received from her children. They are living in different parts of the world (one son in the Army, another in the Navy). She finds full expression of her expansive feelings through her activities in the church, at which she serves sometimes as preacher, sometimes as song-leader, and always as spiritual healer. People from all over the East come

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<sup>12</sup>Once she publically broomed one of her daughters that lived close by for not keeping a clean house.

<sup>13</sup>This value is, because of crowded housing, etc. much wished for, but seldom obtained. It is only the older women who don't seem to care for gossip so much as maintaining their own privacy.

to consult her on the problems of illness, physical and spiritual. Both were regarded by her as curable by the same method, prayer. Her 'family' then, was a large one, and constantly fluctuating, people coming to her for the wisdom of the ages (or the aged, as it were). Eula seems to have resented her power (and perhaps her income) and called her a 'witch woman.' Eugenia in turn, envied Eula in having her own family around her. She indicated this when she tried to adopt or foster children, but she couldn't at that time because she was not married, her husband having died some years earlier. I have seen such rivalries result in physical violence (though not as often of course as among younger women), but in this case the only expression was slur and disdain.

## II

### Attitude Toward Marriage

Eugenia got married to a man who had been boarding with her and who took to sleeping overnight. She said that she would not allow any man to stay with her without getting married. In this she does not echo the attitudes of most of the women in the neighborhood. There are, to be sure, many marriages among its members, but there does not seem to be much relationship between sex or even children and the legal sanction. Marriage seems to be regarded as an act of love, in which you are vowing to live with each other for life (even though in practice this does not always work out.)

Margaret and Petey were married after Margaret had already borne him one child and conceived another. At their wedding, Margaret's mother marched down the aisle holding their baby girl and the two of them stood

at the altar proudly (if distractingly) watching the ceremony. It seemed to be regarded as an announcement to their friends that they were solemnizing their union, and that they were doing it properly (especially from the 'white' point of view). Thus, they had all of the trappings of a traditional wedding, the flowing white dress, the veil, the descent down the church steps, the throwing of the rice, the horn-tooting ride to the reception, the actual reception with the cutting of the wedding cake. Unfortunately, the wedding was to be held at the same place as the reception, so that after the ceremony the happy couple exited to the front steps, had rice thrown at them, came down, got into the cars with the other guests streaming after them, the cars drove a wide circle with appropriate sound effects and returned to the reception.

Some of the other young people, as much through envy as conviction, followed suit. Yet in no way can it be considered a movement away from the basically mother-oriented family organization, or the very free attitude toward sexual relations and the conception of children. I don't believe that this will change until the male can become financially dominant. In those families where the man has been able to provide a steady income, such as Woody and Joanna's, their family life more nearly conforms to the European middle-class pattern. Yet even in cases such as this, they don't seem to attach any stigma to others having sexual relations apart from marriage.

### III

#### Attitude Toward Children

Having children, whether in or out of wedlock, is considered the highest good. The more fertile one is, the more pride one has in her

capacities. This may represent a further residuum of slavery days when the Negro woman was encouraged to breed as often as possible. Much more plausible is the relation of this to any agricultural society.

In a system which requires the labor of the entire family to earn a living, children of a certain age are regarded as an economic asset. They come fast, and there is little conscious birth control. The coming of children is the "Lord's will."...There is pride in large families. Good breeders are regarded with admiration.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand the problem of birth control may exist because of the unwillingness of the performers in the sexual act to put on contraceptives. As in the rural society, children in the city are looked upon as possible economic assets to help the mother out in old age, if not before. However, this seldom works in fact, it being difficult enough for each to provide for himself. The state consequently must assume the burden of providing for the aged.

The functional reason for the large family has passed, yet all of its trappings remain. There is still a great stigma against birth control (furthered perhaps by the fact that the Catholic Church is very strong in the neighborhood), even though various methods seem to be known to the men and women. A woman, such as Constance, with a small family, is very defensive about it. Those with no children at all are almost pariahs. Sissy, for instance, though she is only eighteen is quite conscious of not having had a child (most of her contemporaries have at least one by this time). For a long period she went about saying that she had been sick

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<sup>14</sup> Johnson, Charles S., Shadows of the Plantation, Chicago, 1934, p. 57.



and in the hospital and had one breast cut off and that was why she hadn't yet had a baby. She later told everyone that she was pregnant. All of these stories were denied by Eula, her mother. My wife and Sissy had many conversations on the subject of children and Sissy could never understand why my wife did not want one at that time.

Perhaps another vestige of farm life is the desire to have male children. Though it may not be the prevalent attitude, when Gladys finally had a girl after five boys, we were jubilant, but none of Gladys' friends were. Joanne explained that boys were good luck, and can help out better, but somehow that didn't ring true. The real reason may perhaps be the rivalry that can emerge between mother and daughter as soon as the adolescence of the girl makes her a rival for the attentions of men.

Whether it is a reason for this strange preference for male children, or merely a symptom of lower-class Negro family life, male children seem more emotionally dependent upon their mothers. The young boy, without the dominant male in the family to emulate, seems to have a more difficult time adjusting to life outside his family. Among the boy-children from ages three to ten there seems to be a high incidence of bed-wetting, sissiness, stammering and other speech defects. Often the boys of this age try to compete with the girls in their games and, of course, are not very good at it. It seems that their only training toward a masculine approach to life is achieved through the influence of older boys in school, or, a little later, through the gangs. At this time, their temerity turns upon itself, often, and emerges as belligerence; the new attitude is usually directed against the mother, and she doesn't seem to exact as much control as she previously had.

The training of the girls seems in many ways easier. Just like girls anywhere, they seem to be more conscious of their grooming, appearance, habits than are the boys. Furthermore, they are able to act in imitation of their mothers, and thus help her with her work at a very early age. It is not unusual to see a girl of nine or ten in charge of a large tribe of younger children. It is a standard practice that older children of a family (the boys included) are to look out for younger ones, and this is true even when the mother is around sitting on the doorstep watching the children play.

This situation can result in extremes of imitation. Woodretta, Joanne and Woody's oldest daughter, comes from a close-knit family and is capable of cooking, ironing, and helping with the housework, and has been since she was eight. On the other hand, under not dissimilar circumstances, Eula's granddaughter Josie, emulates older women in attitudes rather than actions; at five years of age, she bosses people around, signifies<sup>15</sup> on every available occasion, and in general is very conscious of her superior role as a 'little mama,' a young woman.

There doesn't seem to be any consistent attitude among the mothers as far as discipline is concerned.<sup>16</sup> Punishment, when it comes, is severe whipping, but reasons for it seem dictated by whim.<sup>17</sup> The Camingerly mother seems to punish acts that appear slight, and countenance acts that

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<sup>15</sup> See glossary under 'signifying' as well as introduction to the toast of the "Signifying Monkey."

<sup>16</sup> For a review of Negro attitudes toward discipline, see Herskovits, op. cit., p. 195 ff.

<sup>17</sup> c.f. Herskovits, pp. 147-49.

seem destructive and harmful. There is great emphasis placed upon obeying the mother's orders. She must be the dispenser of discipline, and she seems to enjoy the role thoroughly. Thus a strict code of behavior is invoked when the mother is around, especially within the home, but the street is like the world, and within certain limitations, the child is free to do as he will on them. Fights, playing with the hydrants, playing in the puddles, anything is permissible on the streets, because that is the world in which every member of the community must learn to live. The only major taboos seem to be destruction of property, and the crossing of the major arteries by the younger children without the permission of the mothers and the help of someone. Differences in attitude are nowhere so clearly expressed as in the realm of rearing children; the few white mothers in the neighborhood are available to their children when something goes wrong on the street; the Negro mothers are not. The Negro children seem very conscious of this difference in attitude and come running to one of the white women for sympathy. There is no resentment involved on the Negro mothers part as far as I can see, but also no change of attitude.

Though it seems to be regarded as standard procedure that the children will get dirty while playing, they had to wear something clean outside to start the day. If nothing was available, the children would have to remain inside. This situation was heightened during holidays, especially Easter. During those periods, all the children had to have a complete new set of dress clothes or they could not be seen. Both Joanne and Gladys were very angry one Easter when they were unable to get the requisite apparel for their children. They are usually provided by the

fathers of the children even if they have otherwise lost contact with the mother. This, of course, often works better in theory than practice.

During the year, girls' hair is done in the traditional 'plaits.' This is done by making a series of small braids all over the head. Another method was what is often called "French braiding." This is done by picking up hair in three strands close to the forehead, and braiding backward flat against the head. As the three strands are braided, further strands are added until the back of the head is reached, where the braids assume the usual 'pigtail' pattern (shorter because of the shortness of their hair). Another similar method is to part the hair on the side and to braid the hair on the wide side in the front and to attach it to the pigtail on that side in the back. On the other side there is only the one pigtail in the back.

On holidays the story becomes quite different. The combs and the hair-straightening solutions emerge and a variety of hair-styles emerge, pony-tail, bouffant, and French twists and knots. And if the weather is good there is quite a style show that goes on up and down the sidewalk.

Unfortunately, the attitude toward clothing held by the mothers can have an effect upon the education of the children. If the mother has not had a chance to do washing, or if shoes or shirts are all worn out and the mother has no money to replace them, the children will be kept at home. This reflects the attitudes that are held by many of the mothers regarding education. Too often school is simply looked upon as a place where the children go for the day, and any small excuse will provide the potential truant with the day away from school.

## IV

The Men

The men, because of the same economic pressures that they felt since slavery, are still leading a mobile existence. Even the young men and youths have long histories of wandering, sometimes to find work, sometimes just adventure. Bobby and Charley Williams had gone to Florida together. Victor, a member of one of the quartets that used to come to the house to record, went down to Richmond, Virginia, on a lark, got into a crap game, killed a man in a fight, and is now in jail in that state. Arthur Snells also went to Virginia to go into the tonsorial business, but returned after 'having some fun.'

It is this ability to be mobile that makes the Negro male so adaptable to army life. Since the armed services have become integrated they offer the men one of the best possibilities for employment. Of the services, the Air Force and the Marines are considered the most desirable to them, perhaps because they are the ones most difficult to get into. Bobby attempted to get into the services on a number of occasions but always failed the examinations.

As there are few fields open to the Negro male the ones who pioneer and excell in these fields are idolized. Sports is perhaps the field most recognized in this way, and the greatest heroes of the neighborhood are Willie Mays and Hank Aaron and the numerous other baseball players that have made a name for themselves. Boxing was one of the sports in which Negroes were able to excel earliest, and 'Sugar Ray' Robinson still excites great admiration, because of his athletic ability as well as his

style of life. One could give numerous examples in other fields of athletics.

The profession in which the Negroes made their earliest gains is entertainment. Many of the fixed conceptions about the Negro concern their entertainment abilities, their musical sense, their ability to 'hold a tune,' their rhythmic sense, etc. Naturally, these are just as false as any fixed conceptions about any group. But the fact that the white world has this view of the Negro has instilled in him a worship of those Negroes who have made successes in the entertainment field, and created a desire on the part of an unnaturally large number of Negroes to make a success on the stage.<sup>18</sup> Nearly every boy that can sing belongs to a quartet, and every quartet dreams of professional success, which many of them are getting through rock-and-roll recordings. 'Kid' features himself a professional comedian. Because of the ability to perform such rhythmic folklore items as "Hambone," many young Negroes dream of rising

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<sup>18</sup>It is interesting to note that just as the white-written minstrel songs were picked up by the Negroes and became at least semi-traditional, perhaps the most emulated of modern performers are "Amos 'n Andy," radio characters created by whites.

Recently, Hollywood has seen the potential of the Negro audience and has been casting Negroes in major roles in many movies. The rise of such performers as Harry Belafonte, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Sidney Poitier has undoubtedly been stimulated by attendance of their movies in Negro neighborhoods.

It is difficult to ascertain whether this attitude toward the entertainment field makes the young Negro (especially the men) any more aware of popular forms of entertainment than any other group. At any rate the lore shows great influence of radio, television, and movies in its form and subject matter.

to stardom playing the bongo drums. Singers, song writers, dancers are to be found everywhere in the area. The fact that Charley Williams had been in a group, "The Turbans," that made a record made him the object of much respect in the neighborhood.

As described above, the Negro male is in a strange social situation. He has usually been raised in a house presided over by a woman or women. This condition sometimes continues into middle-age, even while having children by women whom he lives with occasionally. His financial situation will, in many cases, not permit him to establish a family relationship of his own. Yet, there are many psychological attitudes existing, independent of the financial situation, that seem to perpetuate the family system in status quo.

Negro males, from youth through middle age, exhibit many regressive tendencies that show a strong emotional, perhaps sexual, attachment to their mothers. Strongest of these is the pronounced "Don Juanism." The most respected males of the male community are those that have the best record of conquests of women. Lasting attachments between couples are scoffed at by many of them. Life is viewed as one sexual adventure after another, and this is perhaps fit reason why so many of their stories concern just such subjects.

The strongest statement that I encountered dealing with this attitude was Bobby's when he said, "Man, when I fuck a girl, I never want to see her again." Many others with whom I discussed the subject agreed to some extent with this, including not only youths but young and middle-aged men. Emotional involvements are avoided by many of them. It seems to point directly to a certain amount of guilt feelings that the male has

when he has intercourse, as it violates his emotional commitment to his mother. The factors of this are highly complicated, for the man when he was a child has not only had to share his mother with a number of other children, but has, because of over-crowded housing conditions, often seen his mother compromising herself, and often with a variety of men. This results in his consequent disillusionment with his mother, and with all women to some extent (they often say that you can't 'trust' any woman), that is only partially compensated for by such mechanisms as 'the dozens.'<sup>19</sup>

Yet, even with this disillusionment, the emotional attachments often remain. They are too clearly noticeable in the symptoms of Don Juanism and its close relative, homosexuality, to be overlooked. To assess how much overt homosexuality exists in lower-class Negro communities is difficult.<sup>20</sup> Their folklore provides evidence of the problems. (See for instance the anecdote, "All You Sinners," page 355, or the toast, "The Freak's Ball.") Though there are a few young men who are branded as 'faggots,' most of the signs of homosexuality are surface indication and may be nothing more. The speech problems noted before in children seems to result in lisps and other more feminine manners of expression. The boys have usurped for their own many other signs which seem effeminate when viewed against the background of white middle-class standards (which may, indeed, be invalid).

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<sup>19</sup> For a full discussion of this see introduction to 'Playing the Dozens,' page 218.

<sup>20</sup> It is difficult to discuss the problem of homosexuality among the Negro as so little has been written about it. See Oliver, op. cit., pp. 112-14, 191-2.



Foremost of these outward manifestations is the manner of dress. His cock-of-the-walk attitude is echoed in his clothes; he reflects the trends in men's fashions, but uses them with brighter colors in more daring combinations. This consciousness of dress is further expressed in emphasis on hair style. Negro women for some time have attempted in one way or another to have their hair straightened so that they can wear the same styles as white women. This is still true, but recently (purportedly due to the influence of boxer 'Sugar Ray' Robinson) the men have taken to having their hair straightened in a pompadour style, called a 'process.' It is interesting to note that in order for the process to have the most lasting effect, the hair must be held in place by a handkerchief worn very much the way in which older Negro women used to, and still occasionally do, bind their hair.

Many other small hints indicate that the males are assuming, in some ways, the traditional female role. One of these is that the lead singer in a quartet, and the most valued singer, is the one who can sing best in falsetto. The group is usually organized around this one singer. Charley Williams is a singer of this range.

## V

### The Initiation Process

The Negro boy-child is faced with a dilemma while growing up. Emotionally attached to his mother as the center of his concept of family, he is disillusioned with her in her acts of compromising herself. This consequent attraction and repulsion is to some extent expressed and

worked out through the mechanism of the 'dozens,' and by attaching oneself to the careless values of the older boys and men.

Because there is often no father-figure in the home, not only does the mother have to take over the disciplinary role but the boy loses the whole meaning and conception of fatherhood. It is often laughter-provoking to hear small boys of the same mother but different fathers arguing about whether the man who came to visit was one's father or another's. But when considering the implications of the problem, it becomes somewhat less of a humorous matter.

For each person to react in some way against authority when he is maturing is natural. This is his way of asserting his selfhood, of re-orienting his life so that he can exist as an independent being. In middle-class family life, the authority figure is, of course, the father, against whom the youth rebels. This is not possible for the young Negro as his father has in most cases had little to do with his life. He might, and does to some degree, react against his mother as the authority. Two things, however, prevent this from being a meaningful event: The action is complicated by his emotional attachment to his mother; by the time this event occurs many of the mothers will have assumed a less authoritarian role in their lives.

Perhaps because of this void, this lack of a firm authority figure within the family, many Negro youths react against the larger authority, the law. If so, this is one of the major reasons that he is attracted to gang life and crime. Within the gang, the boy can be made to feel virile, a man, because he can perform the 'manly' acts of proving himself physically. Crime attracts because not only is it a further proof of his

virility but it provides him with an income, the ability to buy nice clothes and have lots of pretty girl-friends. In none of these pursuits is he plagued by any sense of violation of a moral position, because those men from whom he has borrowed his values have no moral sense in this realm.<sup>21</sup>

Having been denied a natural development of his sense of manliness, he must constantly prove to himself that he is a man. This is another facet of his development that leads to gang life and crime. He is proving himself in the eyes of the men and women of the community by doing brave deeds in the teeth of authority. His heroes are the bad men, Stackolee, Jesse James, etc., or the trickster like the 'Signifying Monkey,' both of whom are flaunting the established order to prove their abilities, to exercise their egos. We cannot doubt that such criteria rule in the minds of these youths and young men when one hears them talk about establishing and maintaining the honor of a neighborhood through gangs and gang-warfare. Physical violence is preferred to lack of "guts."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>The amount of illegal activity that goes on in the Camingerly neighborhood alone is astounding. The numbers racket flourishes, and there are numerous people deriving a living from this, either as receivers or pick-up men. Pimping and prostitution is a means of livelihood for a number of young people coming from the area just south of Camingerly. Eula has been jailed many times for making illegal alcoholic beverages. Many of the youths and men have been in jail at one time or another for a variety of offenses.

<sup>22</sup>The Mexicans are less euphemistic and much more to the point in matters of this sort. They see immediately that matters of honor are basically sexual. "According to folk physiology the heart is the seat of man's kinder virtues. Courage and fighting spirit reside in the testicles." Paredes, Americo, With His Pistol in His Hand, Austin, 1958.

This attitude toward virility is shown clearly by the fact that the males are so proud when they make a girl pregnant. Even in cases where they are not sure, really, that they are the father (how could they be when they argue that you can't trust any woman in matters of this sort?), they will claim to be so.

The lore of the men, their verbal expression, reflects many of these generalizations; glorification of the renegade, the criminal, the master of sexual activity.<sup>23</sup> It also shows much about their lives in the descriptions of the actions of the street, the poolhall, the bedroom, the courts, and to some extent, the prisons. These are the scenes of his life in the city.

## VI

### Codes of Behavior

Though in general there seems to be a flippant approach toward manners of address among the members of the community, there are certain set forms of address that one seldom finds violated. Among the children, youths, young men, and women, when talking with peers, nicknames or first names prevail, even among those only slightly acquainted. In talking to an older woman, however, 'Miss' is appended to her name even if she is married. Eula was always known as 'Miss Eula,' especially to the children. Older men are prefixed by 'Mr.' I was usually 'Mr. Roger' to the children but not to the youths.

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<sup>23</sup>For a full discussion of this important phenomenon, see Chapter II.

Among ones intimates one refers to another's mistress or wife as 'your old woman' or 'your main whore' (pronounced like 'hoe'). Conversely, often among the women and girls, the men are their 'old men.' If respect is to be indicated, however, the terms would change somewhat; your woman would be your 'madam,' your man, your 'husband,' or just plain your 'man.'

Though the men tend to be harsh to their women in private, in public one seldom sees this attitude expressed, except when the ones involved are drunk or outraged. Men will make remarks filled with innuendo to women passing, but never in direct language unless they want to insult them and start a fight. The innuendo is part of a game that all involved enjoy, but raw language is seldom encountered in public between men and women. Further, the men will not, in most cases, perform any of their bawdy traditional pieces for the women.

The insult has been brought to a high art among the members of this group. This is fully evidenced with the 'dozens,' but exhibits itself in other manners. There is a real struggle to 'down' someone verbally, and to be able to do so artfully provides a great ego boost for the apt one with words, and much humor to those listening. As is true in many minority groups, the names attached to them by the outside world are used as insults upon individuals within the group. Thus, among the Negroes, one hears the words 'nigger,' 'black ass' among them often, though with a great deal of reserve before whites.

Color awareness begins at an early age, probably because of the free use of just such words. We were amused one day to see two of Gladys' children, Chucky and Kenny, sitting on the back fence arguing about who

was the worse 'nigger,' who was blacker, and nearly falling off the fence laughing about the whole matter. Some of the children's favorite tricks involved the color concept, such as "Hit my hand. You black frying pan." and "A-B-C, you black hynee." Full understanding of the problem doesn't come for some time after this however. Frankie (age eight), one of Eula's grandchildren asked of my wife one day, "When you have children, will they be white or black?"

The relations of white and black in this neighborhood is so little different from other mixed neighborhoods that it only bears brief discussion. Even when one makes friends with a Negro here, it is understood that in disputes, especially if the police is involved, your friends will be on the side of your opponent if he is a Negro, even if he doesn't know him. One of our white neighbors, who is equally friendly with the members of the neighborhood, white and black, could get no one to help him when he managed to capture a Negro that was trying to break into his house. It will take a long time before the members of this neighborhood lose their distaste for the law.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> This results probably because most of the police in the area are from the Italian neighborhoods which border to the South of the Negro area, and the relationship of these two groups has been very up and down throughout the last few years. The police have resorted to strong-arm tactics without provocation on innumerable occasions in the past, creating a very bad public situation.

## VII

Conclusion

These remarks about the Camingerly Negro's attitudes and problems are made in an effort to clarify some of the corresponding facets of their folklore. They can only be considered as a gloss on the material found in the later chapters. There are many other facets to these attitudes and problems which will be brought forth in the future chapters on the life-histories, on verbal dexterity, and in special applications in the introductions and headnotes to the lore itself.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE FORMAL IMPLICATIONS OF FOLKLORE: THE SIGNIFICANCE AND GROWTH OF VERBAL DEXTERITY

Form, order, structure—these are important in creating the psychological situation where instincts otherwise repressed can be represented within the confines of the unreal, yet lifelike, playground of folklore. By creating strict formal unity (the rules of play), matters can be expressed which otherwise would remain unuttered or unacted. In the folklore of any group, these forms are going to assume various shapes. It is the purpose of this chapter to indicate the shapes it does assume among the Camingerly residents, and how the lore shows when a balance is attained between the needs of the community and the necessities of the individual.

Among these Negroes there exists a great reliance upon dexterity, motor and verbal, as the distinguishing characteristics of individuals within the community. As one would suppose, this ability with words and movements reaches its highest level of creativity in grown individuals. However, as far as the psychological and social purpose for the creation of these verbal and motor forms is concerned, we see no real progression from children, to adolescents, to adults. We only notice a growth in the complexity of the forms, techniques. But the forms themselves are to be found in embryo in the lore of the children and the adolescent.

The compromise that seems to have been effected by the individual Negro and society is basically that of improvisation within specific



forms. Most of the popular ring games, hand-clapping games, dances, the "toast," to say nothing of various ways of rhyming, call for some way in which one individual in the group can improvise, can give something of a personal expression. This is a tendency that we can see developing early in the lives of these inhabitants and increasing in complexity as they grow older.<sup>1</sup>

Through verbal forms we can see personal expressions which are most easily interpreted. This does not mean that we can neglect motor dexterity. Too often motor and verbal forms interact. In children's games, for instance, so often the actions demanded by the rules are paralleled by verbal forms. What would the hand-clapping rhymes or the jump-rope rhymes be without the accompanying actions? Couldn't we make the same observations for the sung-dances so popular among the young adults, such as "the hucklebuck"?

The growth of dexterity then, cannot be limited in our discussion completely to verbal expression. Unfortunately, it is beyond the limitations of this study to look very closely at the complex motor habits of these people. Suffice it to say that the dance-forms of the adolescents and young adults are the apex in the development of motor skills begun in the child's games (just as in another realm, the gang organization represents the growth of complexity of the rules of the children's competitive games).

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<sup>1</sup>This may be highly characteristic of the Negro, viz. the origins of jazz, calypso.

In many ways the "toast" must be considered the culmination of all of the tendencies of the verbal skills of Negro men. It utilizes all of the verbal capacities of the narrator, and brings them to a high pitch. Rhyme, turn-of-phrase, onomatopoeia, euphony, exclamation, complex rhythm, repetition, and intricate formal structure are all brought to bear on these long narrative poems. Yet each of these qualities is found to some extent in the folklore of the younger members of the community.

Formal structure plays a large part in children's folklore, though for the most part, with the aid of another element of structure, repetition. The rules of children's games present the outlines of a formal structure, but their real organization is one based on both the rules and the repetitions of the motor and verbal responses concerned. "Hide-and-Go-Seek," for instance, involves a ritual that calls for both the constant use of such opening rhymes as:

Apples, peaches, pumpkin pie  
Who not ready, holler "I."

or

Twenty-four horses in a stable.  
One fell down and broke his navel.  
Ready or not, here I come.  
Anyone around my base is it.

and such additional lines as "ally infree," and the repetition of the motor responses that are called for by the rules of the game.

There are a number of strictly verbal forms used by the children that represent a similar union of the restrictions of form and the impetus of repetition. Part of the pleasure of such rhyme series as the ones beginning "Roses are red, Violets are blue" certainly stems from the tight

(if restricted) form, but just as surely a major part of the pleasure involved arises because the final rhyme represents an improvisation within a familiar (i.e., a repeated) mold.

Rhyme is perhaps a formal unit within itself. Certainly the necessities imposed by adopting a rhyme scheme give forth, in its expression, a pleasure that is akin to working within a formal mold. On the other hand, rhyme could be considered just another adjunct of rhythm.

The unconscious effort toward rhyme may almost be termed a tropism....It is not only rhythm which the Negro seeks in his verses, but rhyme also. The rhyme is undoubtedly one of the essentials to rhythm. Rhyme helps motion, motion makes harmony, and harmony completes the rhythm of his music.<sup>2</sup>

Rhyme is perhaps the first of the elements of verbal dexterity that shows itself among the Camingerly neighbors. The children, ages four and up, seem fascinated by the possibilities of rhyme for taunt purposes. One of its earliest expressions is in those that are invented by the young that make a two line rhyme of the name of the person-to-be-taunted. The rhymes don't have to make sense; the fact that a name is being used in such a context is sufficient taunt:

Bert, Bert,  
You're a flirt.

Kate, Kate,  
You're a skate.

Chuckie, Chuckie,  
You're not lucky.

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<sup>2</sup>Odum, Howard W., and Guy B. Johnson, The Negro and His Songs, Chapel Hill, 1925, p. 288.

Even more devastating are the rhymes directed at the color of clothes worn by the unlucky person at whom the verse is directed:

Red, red,  
Peed in bed,  
Wiped it up with jelly bread.

Brown, brown,  
Went to town,  
With his britches hanging down.

Purple, purple,  
You're a turtle.<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to notice that this fascination with rhyme that seems to emerge between the ages of four and six remains with the inhabitants of the neighborhood for a good part of their life, and often for much the same purpose. The most popular disc-jockeys on the Negro stations announce their records in rhymed introductions. One sees a glimpse into the effect of this rhyming on the children in the hand-clapping rhyme taken directly from the opening of one of these shows:

Bee, be-bop  
This is your Jock.  
Back on the scene  
With a record machine.  
Saying "hoo-poppsie-doo,  
How do you do?"  
When you up, you up,  
And when you down, you down,  
When you mess with Jock  
You upside down.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>For a full representation of these rhymes see

<sup>4</sup>See page

This kind of talking is not just for radio purposes. One can hear this sort of rhyming on the street at almost any time when one person is trying to impress another.

Tell the truth,  
Snag-a-tooth.

'Nough said,  
Ted.

Me and you,  
Fu Manchu.<sup>5</sup>

Rhythm is another technique which seems to begin at an early age, and hold a special fascination for the Negro until late in life, both in verbal and motor terms. Jump-rope rhymes in any group of society indicate a rhythmic challenge, but among Negro children there seems to be a tendency to create more complex rhythms. The basic rhythm of jumping-rope is, of course, the slapping of the rope on the street. This can be, in itself made complex. The most common method of play is 'single jumping,' the rope being turned by the two 'enders' in a single strand. The rhythmic problems are simple because of the strong, single beat created, and rhymes that usually emerge are ones in which the words echo this beat:

Oh Mary Mack, Mack, Mack  
All dressed in black, black, black.  
With silver buttons, buttons, buttons,  
All down her back, back, back.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>See page 236.

<sup>6</sup>See page 103.

This, however, is the least common method of playing in the neighborhood. The 'Double-Dutch' games, in which the 'enders' double the rope and turn the two strands separately and alternately overhand, are much more common. Thus, a rhythm is created that is twice as fast, but not as insistent as in 'singles.' The most common rhyme used with this game, especially by the younger children (five to eight) is the simple counting one:

2,4,6-8, 10.  
2,4,6-8, 20.  
2,4,6-8, 30., etc.

(The 6-8's are said much quicker than any of the other numbers.)

or

D-I-S-H, choice.  
D-I-S-H, choice.

(With the 's' and the 'h' said more quickly than the others.)

"Double-Dutch" and its companion "Double-Irish" call for an even more complicated rhythmic effect, paralleled by complications in motor responses. The most popular rhyme in the neighborhood in the spring of 1959 was the following done in "Double-Dutch."

Hey, everybody  
Gather 'round Madison Town.  
Like two up (skip forward)  
Two back (skip backward)  
False turn (turn)  
Birdland, twice (jump, crossing feet)  
Kick that bird (jump on one foot,  
kicking the other forward and back)  
Then spit that bird. (start over)

Similar remarks on rhythmic complexity could be made concerning many other activities of children and adolescents. Hand-clapping games,

"Hambone," "playing the dozens" rhymes all show a fascination with playing off one rhythmic pattern against another. And this impulse finds its most complex expression in the "toast" where the words are freed from an insistent beat and thus can establish their own vital internal rhythms.

Words in the toast function on three possible levels: 1) the rhythmic, 2) the narrative, and 3) the emotive. I have already discussed the first. The second will be dwelt upon at some length in the next chapter. It is perhaps the last of the verbal capacities to emerge. We see this tendency illustrated earlier among younger Negroes only in the joke or anecdote, and even then the words are often more for emotive than narrative purpose; the creation of laughter and the emotions that lead up to it seem much more important in the child's and adolescent's joke than the story being told.

In much of the Negro lore presented here, the emotive level of the words plays a large part. Words are used as an expression of emotion by the Camingerly residents, often at the expense of sense. This has been observed in Negroes elsewhere:

In view of the Negro's unconscious effort at pleasure-giving expressions and his conscious attempts to make fastidious rhymes, it is not surprising to find many of his verses devoted more to sound than to meaning. In general, the verses which are the most extreme in their sacrifice of sense for rhyme may be divided into two groups, those which are, from the beginning, nothing more than efforts at rhyme, regardless of particular meaning, and those which have the first line containing an appropriate thought, with the second line simply finishing the rhyme regardless of the resultant meaning.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Odum and Johnson, op. cit., pp. 288-9.

Further, these Negroes seem much more concerned with the capacity to place someone at a psychological disadvantage through a verbal trick or a smart conversation than they are with what the actual words mean. This principle is demonstrated often in the introduction to the chapters of collectanea. Proverbs and cliches exist, not so much, as in some cultures, for the encompassment of some universal truth which fits a given situation, but rather as an emotional storehouse that the verbal strategist can call upon at will.

But this problem, the emotive one, really leads us to a more general consideration of the psychological complexities involved in this accent upon the formal aspects of the lore and the growth of verbal dexterity which is represented.

A close reliance upon form usually indicates that the "play instinct" of the group is unusually active. When a group (age group, sex) is presented with a problem that it is unable to cope with in "real" life, it tends to repress it and then to construct a playground on which through play, a life apart from life, the problems can be worked out. A problem that can't be solved is out of control, represents potential chaos to the individual, and this cannot be tolerated. Close check must be kept of it. It must be formalized, directed, channeled.

The major problem which anyone is presented with is the development of 'selfness,' of the ego. It must be developed, must grow within the confines which society imposes upon it. The Negro of the Camingerly area seems to have more of these societal-impositions than most groups, and for this reason his problems in expressing his selfhood seem especially great. He is not only a human being within society but a black individual



within a white society. For the Negro man the problem is even more complicated, for he exists within a society which has, for the most part, taken away his male role. Little wonder, then, that confronted with such problems in developing his ego, the Negro has created many playgrounds in which to channel and, hence, express problems which would otherwise be repressed. We can apply the same developmental point of view that characterizes the analysis of forms.

It is in games that these children first learn to develop their talents, so necessary to the functioning of the ego, within the forms accepted by society. Games are play, so the child can, on the playground, express himself (at least symbolically) in such a way that he can simultaneously release his repressed instincts and commit acts which help him to recognize his individuality.

In the traditional games used within the play-group, the child learns to play various roles, to submit his personal desires to those of the group.<sup>8</sup>

The game, like life, insists on the limitations of rules, imparted by the will of the group. This serves to channel the child's instincts, not repress them further.

Among the Camingerly children, from the beginning of play life, the problems of the boys and the girls seem to differ, and this is echoed in the different types of games which the two groups play. Each group's games

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<sup>8</sup>Watson, W., "Play Among Children in an East Coast Mining Community," Folklore, 54:403. Many of the comments made about the Camingerly children were greatly aided by Watson's method and insights.

are based on the principle of competition to enhance the ego, but the feeling of contest, of 'agon,' is much stronger among the boys.

The girls, for the most part, play games in which each one of them gets a chance to be the performer or the director. In this they are more egalitarian in their drives. For instance, the singing games which are most often played by them are those which call for a circle with one person in the middle (such as "There Stands a Bluebird" or "Puccinello"). The one who is thus isolated not only has the opportunity to choose who her successor shall be; she also has her 'hour on the stage,' her opportunity to perform while she is in the center. Jump-rope games are arranged in a similar fashion, one girl performing while the others watch, the spotlight being passed around the group. In most of the hand-clapping games a basic pattern is established by all and within this pattern each girl is given an opportunity to be called on at one time or another during the game. Another group of games played by the girls shows a like tendency. These are those in which one player is chosen from the group to direct the game and then the others follow her. The winner of the game then takes her place as leader. Such different games as "Giant Steps," "Red Light," and "Old Mommy Witch" all have this same basic structure and orientation.

Both girls and boys do have games that tend to develop motor dexterity, but once again the feeling of contest is much greater among the boys than girls. The girls' game of "Hopscotch" is similar to the boys' game of "Dead-box" in that both involve the sketching in of a limited playing field on the surface of the street and the subsequent attempt to throw a small object (identified with one of the players) into set areas

within that field. But "Hopscotch" seems to exist simply as an opportunity for each girl to show her dexterity in jumping the squares, while in "Dead-box" the boys are much more concerned with knocking the other players out of the game and with gaining the winning square first. An analogous situation exists between "Jacks" and "Marbles." In the former game the girls seem more interested in showing their ability with the jacks and ball than in winning (although winning does play a role in the game), while in the latter the boys are primarily concerned with knocking as many marbles out of the ring as possible, and only secondarily with the dexterity which this exhibits.

There are some games in which the girls participate involving "the chase," a definite kind of competition. These are games which the boys and girls generally play together, tag games "Hide and Go Seek" and "Tin Can Johnnie," for example. They are, however, usually just played by the boys, and are much more representative of male-type play.

Most of the boys' games position one individual against another, or against the group. "Skogogee" (one boy throws top, others try to knock it down), "Marbles," "Tag," "Chase the White Horse Silver" (all boys jumping over one's back), and "Hide and Go Seek" all can be found in this general category. In all such games the feeling of contest runs strong.

One might also expect that out of this strong agonistic feeling the boys would develop the competitive spirit of teams, but somehow the pre-adolescent boys from this neighborhood do not seem to develop the team instinct. This is probably due to the position of the male child in the Negro family. The Camingerly family is, for the most part, mother-

oriented. The mother is both the center of affection and authority, mainly because in most of the families there is no father living with them. Thus the boys not only find themselves completely under the authority of a woman, but they have no man to emulate. Thus their sense of maleness is slow to develop, and, throughout life, it is held onto precariously. In such an emotional complex the boys are unable to develop their ego in any normal fashion. Normally, the ability to subdue one's ego to the authority of the group in games represents a definite growth beyond the demands of the contest revealing individual skill. Here, however, because of the social organization previously discussed, this ability does not emerge very strongly among the pre-adolescent boy in the neighborhood.

The ability to organize in this fashion seems to come at some time late in adolescence among these Negro youths, and when it does arrive, it comes strongly. Nothing could be more formal, more game-like than the gang and gang-life which assumes great importance at this point in their lives. The rigid hierarchy, the strong feeling of membership, the partisan area idea all permeate the structure of the gang, and point up its origins in play. (Unfortunately, the playground is too close to real life, while the morality is still that of the playground.)

The social psychologist Watson recognized the importance of the "orientation of space," the 'sovereign ground' idea, in developing team organization.

Conflict and rivalry between different play-groups is invariably based on this loyalty of place, and expresses the need to differentiate one from the other, and leads to an understanding of social as well as topological differences....Through association

the play group encourages loyalty to the kind of people to whom the child conceives himself as belonging.<sup>9</sup>

But Watson here is talking about a process which normally originates among boys, children, not among youths and young men. This feeling of neighborhood, of place seems to come late to the Negro male and lasts longer and with greater strength than one would imagine. The gangs are organized on the principle of place.<sup>10</sup>

It is interesting to note that this feeling of group identity is developed among some Negro children in this neighborhood, but it is among the girls not the boys. This is shown in the following rhyme:

Get out the way before we knock you down.  
We are rough, we are tough.  
We are the girls don't take no stuff.  
So take off your shoes and smell our feet,  
For we are the girls of Waverley Street.<sup>11</sup>

It is also interesting, in this realm, to notice that at the time when the males are just beginning to develop this sense of the group, the girls have developed sufficient control over their world (probably through emulation of their mothers) that they no longer have to channel their problems into the formal and removed climes of the playground. Thus, we

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 401-2.

<sup>10</sup>The morality of the gang is based upon the sovereignty of the neighborhood. All gang acts are ostensibly done to enhance or defend the 'honor' of the place. Of course, this is an opaque disguise for a release of anxiety.

<sup>11</sup>See page 175.

encounter very little folklore from females after adolescence, except for those facets of lore involving special knowledge (custom, superstition, belief, cures, etc.).

In view of the above observations it does not seem surprising that the spirit of contest remains a major force in the lore of the men. Their egos have experienced a stunting in their development. They are still forced to prove themselves constantly. With adolescence comes an awareness of sex, and at this time the major part of the contest becomes, overtly, a sexual matter. This is observable in both the physical contest and the verbal.

The verbal contest has existed, of course, among the children. Taunts, jokes, riddles, catches—all exist as an opportunity for the child to indicate his individual capacity through the triumph of the control of words. The catches (dialogue in which one is able to trick the other) probably illustrate this element most clearly.

Look up. (other does)  
 Look down (other does)  
 See my thumb? (holds his thumb up)  
 Gee, you're dumb.

Could you read?  
 Yes.  
 Could you write?  
 Yes.  
 Could you smoke your daddy's pipe?

Say "washing machine."  
 "Washing machine."  
 I'll bet you five dollars your drawers ain't clean.

It is just this impulse, to verbally best someone, when coupled with a growing awareness of sex and the complex of emotions that surround

it, that results among youths in the practice of "playing the dozens" in rhyme.

I fucked your mother between two sticks.  
Up jumped a baby named "Tom Mix";

I fucked your mother in City Hall.  
Billy Penn said, "Don't take it all."<sup>12</sup>

One sees, in this phenomenon, the attempt to achieve sexual identity at the same time that one is releasing many of the repressed hostile feelings caused by the loose morality of one's own mother. (Even if the mother had not been loose, similar hostile emotions exist because of the initial experience of the child's rejection by the mother.) Though 'playing' is not always done in the formal fashion of rhyme, it is significant that during the earliest period when this exercise goes on (that is when the anxiety concerning the hostility is greatest), the youths do 'play' within the strict formality of rhyme to a great extent.

Similar contests among older males, involving greater complexities, derive directly from the same source of anxiety as does the child's catches and the youth's dozens rhymes. In fact, just listening to casual conversation among the male members of this community one can see many of the same forces operating on their attempts to communicate. Repetition plays a large role in every conversation; a good point is repeated three or four times for emphasis. Rhymes, as mentioned, remain a strong force in their verbal patterns. The potential rivalry presented by each person

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<sup>12</sup>Collected from John H. 'Kid' Mike.

one is talking to, whether friend or foe, has the effect of turning most conversation into verbal battles, albeit in most cases friendly ones. This is amply illustrated in the following transcription of a conversation with a young man (age 28) which is an attempt to give a typical dialogue:

"Man, why you want to look at me like that?"

"'Cause you ugly."

"I'm ugly? You got the nerve to call me ugly?"

"Yeah, you ugly."

"No, I ain't."

"Look, boy, you so ugly that the stork that brought you here should be locked up by the F.B.I."

"Look here, man, you was so ugly when you was a baby that your mother had to put a sheet on your face so sleep could creep up on you."

"And your girl, your wife ain't no cuter."

"Wait a minute. Don't you talk about my wife."

"Your wife is ugly. Me and your wife went out to get a drink and have a good time and she was so ugly she had to put on sneaks to sneak up on the drinks. Now you know there ain't no sense to that. She look like something I used to feed peanuts to in the zoo."

"You calling my wife ugly?"

"No, I ain't saying she's ugly. I just said she was ruined. Now I don't know where she was but when they was giving out looks she must have been hiding down in the cellar somewhere. And you. When they was giving out looks you must have been playing craps. You look like you been slapped in the face with a stick of dynamite and knocked down with a sack of razor blades. You ought to be 'shamed of yourself."

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The conversation here is obviously harsher, more vitriolic because the description was made into a tour de force by the informant. The effect remains true to life, however.

It is evident that speech with this group of men is a method of proving one's identity, but significantly, if not through play itself, at least through elements shared with play, formal methods of language, turn-of-phrase, rhyme, etc. This becomes even more evident in the following conversation with the same informant. This began as a discussion of the "dozens" but enlarged to include other methods of converse with his peers:

The dozens is a funny sort of thing. Some guys can take it and some can't. Some guys will take it so much. Some guys, they'll start it, but they can't take but so much of it.

Just like mounting on the wrong guys down at the pool room. Cats be coming in there, gambling. Suddenly one them say, "Suck my ass." He say, "You suck my ass and the box, that way you can't miss my asshole." Cat says, "Sucking ass is out of style, button your lipper, suck my dick awhile." He said, "Sucking dicks ain't no trick. Button your motherfucking mouth up my asshole, nuts and dick." Anything. Just one's trying to get above another one, each time they say something you know.

"Now you suck my ass." "Ain't nobody fucking with you." "You fuck with me and I'll bust your motherfucking mouth." You might say to him, "Well, you'd be better locked up in a phonebooth sandpapering a lion's ass (and that's close contact) than fucking with me." "You'd do better jump in a fire with gasoline suit on than be jumping on my chest." They say like, "You'd be better in a lion's den with a motherfucking side of beef on your shoulder, than do any fucking with me." Might tell a guy something like, "Don't you know I ain't worrying about you 'cause I'll run up your motherfucking throat, jump down your motherfucking lungs, tap dance on your kidneys, remove your motherfucking appendicides, move out your god damn

intestines, kill you dick and die, your heart stop beating." It's just passing speech. Guys don't mean no harm; they just saying it. If people walked past and didn't know you, they'd swear there'd be blows coming. You get used to it. And when somebody say something, you just say something back. People that don't know you would figure you're just getting ready to fight. Just passing speech.

"I'ma put something on your ass." You know, just passing speech. Words that just comes naturally, you heard, and heard, and you repeat'em and repeat'em. After a guy gets to hanging around so long, he learns them. You find a guy coming in who never cursed in his life, after a month or two, same thing. He come in, say, "What doing man?" "Fuck my ass." You know, before he came in never cursed in his life. Now every third word he's going to curse. Rabbit's cattin' pool, every second word is "motherfucker." Just passing speech.

This kind of talk is not, by any means limited to the pool-hall.

Almost any time one finds a group of young men together one can hear similar speech. And it is in these groups that the 'toast' and the 'joke' are the highest form of entertainment, for they utilize the most artful use of these speech patterns.

In these folk narratives the performer is doing the ultimate in the possibilities of words. He is not only defeating his peers through his use of words (by comparison) but he is creating a world of his own. He is master of the situation he is narrating; he is the director of the lives of the heroes of the pieces, and of the structure in which they are appearing. Thus, any of the battles won, physical or verbal, are won by both the hero and the narrator. Yet he is in so much control of this small universe that he is both protagonist and antagonist in this contest. He directs this battle as well as winning it. The glory is all his, and the triumph is much more than just a verbal one.

It is in fact a psychological control that is gained through this control of words. It gives to the "good talker" a great feeling of self-confidence that is so important to him in his relations with others. But we must not neglect the sexual aspect of the words in favor of strictly social matters. Puckett has pointed out that the Negroes of the South went to school to an older man who was "experienced in the words and ways of courtship," who could teach "young gallants...the way in which they should go in the delicate matter of winning the girl of their choice."<sup>14</sup> The object in this system was to dazzle the girl of your choice with your ability with words (especially polysyllabic ones) and thus to win her. Though much of the "good talker's" talents are not used in the company of women ("toasts" for instance are seldom performed for them), yet when one sees a man trying to impress a girl with his power over words, one sees the sexual importance of the development of verbal dexterity. It can be a talent as important as physical force.

Dexterity with words is, indeed, the greatest single element of symbolic control that the male members of the community have devised. This accounts for the force of the words, the variety of the forms assumed, and their efficacy.

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<sup>14</sup>Puckett, Newbell N., Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro, Chapel Hill, 1926, p. 30. This kind of custom is certainly not unique—witness the stress that Western European culture has put upon love letters and love poems.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF FOLKLORE: THE LESSON OF THE NARRATIVE

The development of personality is, to use Jung's term, a process of individuation.<sup>1</sup> That is saying little more than what has been said in the past; it is necessary, in order to mature and to assume a place in society's scheme of life, for each person to come to a secure picture of himself as an individual. It was noted in the last chapters that the Camingerly Negro male has certain elements in his social structure that tend to obstruct or at least impede this process of individuation.

In Chapter One an attempt was made to indicate the reasons, historical and sociological, why the Negro (and especially the Negro male) encounters certain problems which create anxieties which stunt the development of his ego. In Chapter Two it was pointed out that the struggle to control one's universe has a natural concomitant, certain formalistic expressions. It was also noticed there, that the development and use of the resultant folkloristic forms were a good index to the anxieties that exist for the Camingerly group. It is the intent of this chapter to take one of the formal aspects of the last chapter, the narrative element, and

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<sup>1</sup>For Jung's major discussion of his theory of personality development, see The Psychology of the Unconscious, N. Y., 1916. It has been further developed profitably in terms of myth alone by Joseph Campbell in The Hero With a Thousand Faces, N. Y., 1949. The procedure of viewing myth as a revelation of psychic states of development as formulated by Freud and expanded by Jung, I have found extremely useful, indeed crucial to the formulation of my ideas concerning this small collection.

to examine it in much the same light, attempting through this to obtain further insights into the function of the lore of this community.

Each piece of collected lore from any group must be considered as a synchronism, triggering simultaneous responses on many levels within both the performer and his audience, touching both the existence of the individuals involved and their relationship to society. This is especially true when dealing with narrative lore. The performer (and the individuals in his audience through their involvement and approbation) achieve a certain kind of anxiety release by the externalization of some of their otherwise unutterable or unexpressed significant thoughts and actions. Closely related to this, the narrative may function in order to give sanction to the values of the group, and thus to provide a guide for future actions. Further, certain anxieties may exist on both an individual and a group level, due to a specific situation of a group within a larger society. In other words, by laughing at, railing at, perhaps even just mentioning some of the excesses or inequities of life, a piece of folklore can salve some of the wounds created by these problems.

The anxieties which exist for the lower-class Negro male, which are created by social impediments and which cause serious detours in the process of individuation, are mirrored in the levels on which they are expressed in the lore. His situation as a poor man, as a male in a society in which his women can find work and status more easily than he, and as a black man in a white man's society causes physical, historical, social, and psychological repercussions. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine some of the more significant narratives collected

from the Camingerly young men to indicate the terms in which the anxieties resulting from these situations are expressed, perhaps alleviated to a certain degree. Before we can do so, however, it is necessary to point out some elements that are common to a number of the narratives and point up their possible uses and significances.

As all these social problems unite to dislocate the egos of the young men, it should come as no surprise that the most dominant aspect of the point of view of the narrative pieces (in addition to the formal and stylistic devices mentioned in Chapter Two) is the insistent note of the personal involvement of the narrator in the story. Just as we saw the function of lore in this group as the attempt of one individual to best another, so in the stories we can discern a similar accent upon the role of the performer in the importance of the narrative persona expressed in a device we shall call the "intrusive 'I.'"

Throughout the narratives we are conscious of a close relationship between the hero of the tale and the person doing the narration. In most cases, especially in the toasts, the point of view is strictly first person, allowing the complete identification of narrator and hero. In others, this identification is put at a slight remove by placing the narration in the third person, but allowing the hero some attribute by which we can identify him with the narrator (a colored man competing with members of other races, a man of words in a dupable group, etc.).

This "intrusive 'I'" is a convenient gambit in the narrative game. It allows the narrator two personae at the same time, his own as narrator or commentator, and that of the hero. He can unite the two at will if he is artful in his narration. He can also dissociate the two at will

if he wishes. It is important in certain stories that he be able to do so, as there will be actions with which he (the narrator) will not approve, or situations he would not want to be in. As opposed to the classic English and Scottish ballads, there is nothing removed, long ago, impersonal about these narratives. Even when the narrator's personae retreats from that of the hero or main character, the narrator remains, intrudes as a commentator. The 'I' never disappears completely. It may occasionally recede temporarily.<sup>2</sup>

Because of this "intrusive 'I'" the question emerges as to with what sort of heroes one finds these men identifying themselves. This is especially important as the action patterns of the heroes will dictate the value system which the narrator (and audience) is espousing. In the broad view of the narratives, the heroes fit into two major categories, the trickster (or 'clever hero') and the badman (or a special type of 'contest hero').

The trickster figure has been the most identified hero in Negro lore throughout this country and the West Indies. This is perhaps due

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<sup>2</sup>Such a device as the 'signature' is strong evidence for this. At the end of a piece it returns the audience fully into the hands of the narrator and reminds them that he has been the motion behind the piece all along. See Snell's version of "The Monkey and the Baboon," which uses the stock signature:

If anybody asks you who pulled that toast,  
Just tell them old bullshitting Snell, from coast-to-coast.  
I live on Shotgun Avenue, Tommygun Drive  
Pistol Apartment, Room 45.

to a real prevalence for this type character in Negro story. On the other hand, it may be because Joel Chandler Harris noticed the similarities between European animal trickster tales and those found among the Southern Negro, and collected and printed many of these stories in his Uncle Remus books. His success with these works may have influenced future collections of the same type.<sup>3</sup>

At any rate, we can no longer claim that the trickster figure is the only, or even the dominating, hero type encountered in Negro tales. But he is still to be encountered among the Negro in the guise of the "Signifying Monkey," the "colored man," "John," and (sometimes) the preacher.<sup>4</sup>

The trickster or 'clever hero' is one who triumphs or functions by means of his wits. Or as Orrin Clapp notes:

He either vanquishes or escapes from a formidable opponent by a ruse. The clever hero is usually smaller and weaker than those with whom he is matched, frequently being a diminutive animal. The victory of the clever hero is the perennial triumph of brains over brawn, la sagesse des petits.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Richard Dorson seems to agree with this point of view. "Influenced by Harris...subsequent collections emphasized animal tales." American Folklore, Chicago, 1959, p. 176.

<sup>4</sup>Richard Dorson's published collections offer the best cross-section of recent Negro tales.

<sup>5</sup>Clapp, Orrin E., "The Folk Hero," JAF, 62:20.



Perhaps the petit quality to which Clapp refers has implications beyond matters of size. The trickster figure functions in society not at all like a small animal; he functions like a small human being, a child. His delight in tricking is reminiscent of the similar pleasure children derive from tricking their peers. Indeed, in almost every sense the trickster is a child. He has no perceivable set of values except the demands of his ego (in the disguise of his id). One could not say that he is immoral; he is, rather, amoral, because he exists in the stage before morality has had a chance to inculcate itself upon his being. He is "the spirit of disorder, the enemy of boundaries."<sup>6</sup>

"Although he is not really evil (i.e. against established order or morality), he does the most atrocious things from sheer unconsciousness and unrelatedness."<sup>7</sup> (parenthesis mine) He is an individual just beginning on the quest for identity; "A minatory and ridiculous figure, he stands at the very beginning of the ways of individuation."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Kerenyi, Karl, "The Trickster in Relation to Greek Mythology," in Radin, Paul, The Trickster, N. Y., 1956, p. 185. Kerenyi goes on, commenting on the release mechanism of the trickster story: "Disorder belongs to the totality of life, and the spirit of this disorder is the trickster...the function of this mythology, of the tales told about him, is to add disorder to order and so make a whole, to render within the fixed boundaries of what is permitted, an experience of what is not permitted."

<sup>7</sup>Jung, C. G., "On the Psychology of the Trickster Figure," in Radin, op. cit., p. 203.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 211.

The existence of this amoral, this child-like hero<sup>9</sup> creates important questions. If, as we stated in the introduction, the narrative functions both as an expression of otherwise repressed anxieties<sup>10</sup> and as a "tutor, the shaper of identities," why has the Negro chosen to represent himself and his values as child-like? There are a number of possible answers. In the guise of the small (child-like) animal, the Negro is perhaps fulfilling the role in which he has been cast by his white "masters." (The childish "Uncle Tom" who is 'convinced' of his simple state and thus needs the 'protection' of his masters.) At the same time, in this role he is able to show a superiority over those larger or more important than himself through his tricks, thus partially salving his wounded ego. This is apparent in the "Marster-John" cycles where he is tricking the white man, or in the Br'er Rabbit stories where he is getting the better of larger animals. This might be the function of the trickster on the sociological level; a veiled reaction against over-domination while preserving the role in which he has been cast.

The psychological satisfaction of the trickster story functions in similar terms. As Melville Herskovits says of the trickster figure in general:

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<sup>9</sup>This identity of child and trickster seems to have been recognized early, as trickster festivals mocking the church or government in the Middle Ages, called among other things, festum puerorum. Ibid., p. 198

<sup>10</sup>The badman, as the trickster, channels destructive impulses into a formal unity. See discussion of this above, page 63, and through Chapter Two.

Psychologically the role of the trickster seems to be that of projecting the insufficiencies of man in his universe onto a smaller creature, who in besting his larger adversaries, permits the satisfaction of an obvious identification to those who recount or listen to these stories.<sup>11</sup>

The trickster, then, may represent to the Negro through identification, the small, often assailed, hero in control of his world through guile (the only defense available to the Negro under the slave and the post-slave system).

But it is not the trickster's smallness or his guile which really provides the Negro with his greatest source of anxiety-release. It is his amorality. Reaction against authority, the white man's word and law is forbidden. But this revolt is so important to the psychic growth of the individual. The only rebellion available then is through the actions of a figure who has undergone an (apparent) regression to the child-like state where he is not responsible for his actions because he has not yet learned the difference between right and wrong. His acts are unconscious, therefore extend beneath (or above) his ability to make choices.

He is both subhuman and superhuman, a bestial and divine being who's chief and most alarming characteristic is his unconsciousness.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>"Trickster" in The Standard Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend, N. Y., 1949, p. 1123.

<sup>12</sup>Jung, op. cit., p. 203.

His then is the rampant ego, the ego without the confines of the prison of society, because it exists in the permissive world accorded to other childish individuals. The trickster provides a full escape for those Negroes who have been offered no opportunity to feel a control over their own lives, no method for developing their egos through specific action. As such, the trickster may reflect the real child-like state of a severely stunted ego, or a veiled revolt against authority in the only terms available. At the same time it allows the performer and audience to express some of its destructive impulses in this acceptable form.

But the badman, not the trickster, is the most popular hero among the Camingerly people, but we will not be able to discuss fully the reasons for this until we analyze some specific stories later in the chapter. The badman represents a conception quite different from the trickster. He is, in many ways, a 'contest hero':

...the (contest) hero is placed in the position of publicly defeating all rivals. The winner is acclaimed hero or champion. The rivalry may be in skill, fortitude, virtue, or in main strength but such proof of the hero by contest with other humans is almost universal.<sup>13</sup>

The badmen of the Camingerly group, "Stackolee," "The Great Mac-Daddy," Jesse and Frank James, are like the classic conception of the 'contest hero' in that they are powerful, do overcome all rivals, and

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<sup>13</sup> Clapp, op. cit., p. 19.

are (secretly) acclaimed as heroes because of their strength and will. This is almost the point where the resemblance ceases.

Where the trickster is a perpetual child, the badman is a perpetual adolescent. His is a world of overt rebellion. He commits acts against taboos and mores, as does the trickster, but in the case of the badman they are discharged in full knowledge of what he is doing. In fact, he glories in this knowledge of revolt. He is consciously and sincerely immoral. As a social entity he is rebelling against white man's laws. As a male he is revolting against woman's attempt to emasculate him. As a poor man he is reacting against his perpetual poverty.

But his ego is not unbridled like the trickster's; rather, it is directed, but not in positive terms as in the usual contest hero, but rather against anything which attempts to constrain him. His expression of his ego is his physical prowess. He is the strong man, who, because of his strength, accepts the challenges of the world. He is ruler through his powers and anything which threatens his domain threatens his ego and must be removed. Where guile and banter is the weapon of the trickster, arrogance and disdain serves the badman. He does not aim to be a god, but rather to be the eternal man in revolt, the devil.

The rebellion against authority as exemplified in the badman is much more overt than in the trickster. Here we have the open defiance which we are able to see exhibited in real life among the Negro in the activities of their gangs and the establishment of their gang leaders, and, with some of them, later in their life as criminals. The values

of this group in revolt are carried, implied in the conduct of their badman heroes. Life, as well as lore, admits a more open expression of revolt than in the past, and this is echoed in the nature of the heroes worshipped by these Negroes.

Perhaps it would be more instructive to apply some of these generalizations to specific narratives. Let us first look at a tale of a trickster, "The Signifying Monkey and the Lion."

The opening makes it clear what sort of creature the monkey is:

Deep down in the jungle, so they say.  
 There's a signifying motherfucker down the way.  
 There hadn't been no disturbing in the jungle  
     for quite a bit,  
 For up jumped the monkey in the tree one day and laughed,  
     "I guess I'll start some shit."

The name "Signifying Monkey" shows him to be a trickster, 'signifying' being the language of trickery, that set of words or gestures which arrives at "direction through indirection" and which is used often to humiliate an adversary, especially among the young. It is a common device used by Negro children, but it is cause for reproach from their mothers. Indeed, there is a proverb often invoked against the user of this method, "Signifying is worse than dying."

The monkey, using this device of the child, is shown to be invoking his powers in an attempt to stir up trouble. And the dialogue that ensues shows how the process of signifying finds expression. The monkey is a master of the technique.

Now the lion come through the jungle one peaceful day,  
 When the signifying monkey stopped him and this is  
     what he started to say.

He said, "Mr. Lion," he said, "A bad old motherfucker  
 down your way,  
 He said, "Yeah, the way he talks about your folks is  
 a certain shame.  
 I even heard him curse when he mentioned your grand-  
 mother's name."  
 The lion's tail shot back like a forty-four  
 When he went down that jungle in all uproar.

The fight that ensues between the lion and the elephant is almost epic.  
 The lion gets badly beaten, as could be expected. (At least the monkey  
 expected it.) The monkey proceeds as a signifier to rub salt in his  
 wounds from the safety of his tree.

When they was fussing and fighting, lion come back  
 through the jungle more dead than alive,  
 When the monkey started more of that signifying jive.  
 He said, "Damn, Mr. Lion, you went through her yester-  
 day, the jungle rung.  
 Now you come back today, damn near hung."

But the monkey's words are larger than his potential actions. His signi-  
 fying leads him to get excited and he falls and is captured by the lion.  
 He has to use all of his guile to escape from this situation, first call-  
 ing on the sympathy and then on the pride of the lion:

The monkey looked up with a tear in his eyes.  
 He said, "Please Mr. Lion, I apologize."  
 He said, "You lemme get my head out the sand,  
 Ass out the grass, I'll fight you like a natural man."  
 The lion jumped back and squared for a fight.  
 The motherfucking monkey jumped clear out of sight.

Once again he gets too excited while signifying from his tree-retreat and  
 this time the lion has captured him for good.

Again he started getting panicked and jumping up and down.  
 His feet slipped and his ass hit the ground.

Like a bolt of lightning, stripe of white heat,  
 Once more the lion was on the monkey with all four feet.  
 Monkey looked up again with tears in his eyes.  
 He said, "Please, Mr. Lion, I apologize."  
 Lion said, "Ain't gonna be no apologizing.  
 I'ma put an end to his motherfucking signifying."  
 Now when you go through the jungle, there's a tombstone  
     so they say,  
 'Here the Signifying Monkey lay.'

So the unusual situation occurs where the hero dies. This fact seems significant. The trickster, as we have noted, is the eternal child. The Negro trickster story had a real place in the ante-bellum and post-bellum South where this was the sort of pose which the Negro was forced to assume; the subservient child-like creature, the "Uncle Tom" who was allowed his few tricks as his idiosyncracies. But the attitudes, the values inherent in this approach to revolt have changed considerably. Because of recent developments in the lot of the Negro, especially in the Northern cities, he has been able to express himself more overtly, and thus to escape his image as a perpetual child. Thus, it is not surprising that the trickster finds as little place as he does in the folklore of this group of Negro city-dwellers, and when he does exist in their traditional lore, his maneuvers lead him not to triumph but to death.

Illustrative of this tendency away from trickster values is the change which comes over Brother Rabbit in the imaginations of these urbanites. The little animal becomes the strong man. The only story which I was able to collect of the ex-trickster includes the following description:

(Bear and Buzzard have tried to trick Rabbit into giving himself up by throwing a party and not inviting him.)



Brother Rabbit was sitting on his post and all. Said, "Where you all going?" "Down to Brother Buzzard's house." "Brother Buzzard?" "Yeah, Brother Fox is giving a party over there." Rabbit ran to the house and got dressed and ran down to the house. Brother Buzzard said, "Sorry, Brother Rabbit, Brother Fox and Brother Bear say they don't want you in it. I'm sorry. That's what they told me."

So the rabbit turned away with his head turned down. He feeling sad, downhearted, tears in his eyes. Felt like he was alone in the world. But then he got mad. He said, "I know what I'll do." He went home and shined his shoes and got his shotgun and went back and kicked the door open. "Don't a motherfucker move." He walked over the table, got all he wanted to eat, walked over to the bar and got himself all he wanted to drink. He reached over and grabbed the Lion's wife and he danced with her. Grabbed the Ape's wife and did it to her. Then he shit in the middle of the floor and he walked out.<sup>14</sup>

Agility is an attribute much more acceptable than guile. In his role as the great pool and card player the monkey finds greater success, as is seen in the toast of "The Monkey and the Baboon." In this tale the hero is portrayed as an adept at games and his agility pays off, for in this role he has acquired status symbols, in his 'smart' manner and his sharp clothes.

Now a few stalks shook and a few leaves fell,  
And up jumped the monkey, sharp as hell.  
Had a one-button roll, two-button satch.  
You know, one of them boolhipper coats with a belt  
in the back.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>For a full text of this see page 364.

<sup>15</sup>Arthur Snell's text, page 314.

The monkey still has power with his words, but he uses it simply to add a brilliant finish to the veneer of his actions. For instance, he is not satisfied to win at a game of cooncan; he must cap the game by laying down his cards in the following flourish of victory:

So hop Mr. Rabbit and skip Mr. Bear.  
It's gonna look mighty shady but there's  
    'leven of them there.

(A lay of eleven cards wins the game.)

But agility is not the ultimate in values to the Negro male; it is meanness, strength, and the ability to revolt in the face of authority and possible death. In this realm the badman reigns. He will often say such as, "I'm a bad motherfucker and I don't mind dying." He is highly conscious of his role. The most characteristic and exciting of the badmen is "Stackolee."

"Stack" is a mean man, a purveyor of violence. He does not hesitate to hurt, taunt, kill, if someone offers him the slightest insult or reaction. Any act that he does is executed with the greatest show of strength and arrogance, and with the smartest kind of flourish. Even though he is down on his luck when we first meet him, he doesn't let that affect his pride. Perhaps it serves to make him even more mean and deadly.

I walked through water and I waded through mud.  
I came to a little-old hole in the wall called  
    "The Bucket of Blood."  
I walked in, asked the man for something to eat.  
Do you know that bastard gave me a stale glass  
    of water and a fucked-up piece of meat.  
I said, "Raise motherfucker, do you know who I am?"  
He said, "Frankly, I don't give a damn."

I knowed right then that sucker was dead.  
 I throwed a thirty-eight shell through that mother-  
 fucker's head.<sup>16</sup>

A girl comes over and offers herself in an obvious attempt to keep him there until the murdered man's brother Benny Long (or Billy Lyons) gets there. He accepts both challenges and wins them in the grandest of styles. He is as magnificent in sex as he is in battle. The two of them are upstairs, hear the door close below and know it is Benny Long.

"Who had a nerve to put a hole in my brother's head?"  
 I said, "Me, motherfucker, to put your mind at ease. I'm that bad-ass so-and-so they call 'Stackolee.'"  
 He said, "I heard of you, Stack, from tales of old. But you know you tore your ass when you fucked my hole.  
 But I'ma give you a chance my brother never got. I'ma give you a chance to run,  
 'Fore I reach in my cashmere and pull out my bad-ass gun."  
 Just then some old sucker over in the corner said,  
 "Somebody call the law."  
 He stretched out and put a forty-five shell through that motherfucker's jaw.  
 A cute little broad came and said, "Benny, please."  
 He blowed that bitch down to her knees.  
 And out went the lights.  
 And Benny Long was in both of my thirty-eight sights.  
 Now the lights came on and all the best,  
 I sent that sucker to eternal rest,  
 With thirteen thirty-eight bullet holes 'cross his motherfucking chest.

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<sup>16</sup>Charley Williams' text, page 291.

Benny, as you see, is built up as being just as mean and strong as Stack, so that Stack's triumph will be a fitting one. An appropriate end to a story of this sort is Stack's violent boast:

I was raised in the backwoods, where my pa raised  
a bear.  
And I got three sets of jawbone teeth, and an extra  
layer of hair.  
When I was three I sat in a barrel of knives,  
Then a rattlesnake bit me, crawled off and died.  
So when I come in here, I'm no stranger.  
'Cause when I leave, my asshole print leaves 'danger.'

In such characters as Stackolee we have the embodiment of the values of the community, especially those of the young men. We have discussed some of the reasons for this development. Such values, when acted upon, serve as a reminder of masculinity to those doing the act, and to those vicariously enjoying it. Such violent actions are the rebellion against authority one expects in adolescents and others with an adolescent ego development. The Negro male must find some manner in which he can achieve self-respect, and this seems to be the easiest way to express it within the confines of this lower-class, semi-literate community. The Devil is the dominating image for these men, for he represents the pride, the arrogance, the strength, the rebellion, the reaction against confinement and morality into which the impulses of their ego are channeled.

In one story, the saga of the Negro stoker "Shine" aboard the Titanic at the time of its sinking, we can begin to glimpse some emergent values that are to some degree different from those we have observed above. Briefly, the story is that Shine is the one that informs the captain of the ship about the holes in the hull after the crash of the ship with the iceberg. The captain keeps sending him down to pump, and he

keeps re-emerging, telling the captain further information on the size of the hole. Finally, Shine jumps in the water and begins swimming, and he does so very well. He is then given three temptations, money from the captain, and sex from the captain's wife and his daughter. All of these he turns down. He is then challenged by the shark and the whale but is able to outperform them. He swims safely to the shore.

In Shine we have a hero who has guile and a trickster's command of the language, but he is no trickster. We have a hero who has amazing physical powers, but he is much more than a badman or even a contest hero. He is able to perform acts which qualify him as a much more complete hero than any of the others we have encountered previously. First of all, he performs feats, is a "legendary hero." Shine's amazing action of swimming away from the sinking, even in outswimming the creatures in whose natural habitat he is existing, qualifies him firmly as a performer of feats. Further, his declining of the temptations of money and sex add other attributes to his status as hero; he is a passer of trials, of tests.

Shine exhibits in his actions a sense of task which is conspicuously absent in the actions of any of the other heroes discussed earlier. Stackolee, presented with a similar situation would certainly have accepted the offer of sex and stolen the money. But Shine seems to perceive a direction to his actions. His abilities not only indicate an amazing physical and verbal talent but also show a capacity to turn his back on just those status symbols for which the other heroes have been fighting. After all, Stack and the Monkey are reacting against the insecurity caused by their poor financial state and their inability to firmly express their masculinity. But these are exactly those things which Shine is turning

down in his replies to the captain, his wife, and his daughter. He would not be able to do so were not his sense of himself as an individual not in a firmer state than we otherwise perceive in the heroes of this group.

Shine makes it very clear that he is turning his back on white people. He answers one of the offers of the captain's wife:

You know my color and you guessed my race.  
You better jump in the water and give these  
sharks a chase.

It is also clear throughout that his triumph is done in the name of his race. He is pointed out as a Negro on a ship that was reknown for not allowing that race aboard as passengers. He was thus isolated, away from his people, being tested. Do we not then have in this toast a message of some sociological and psychological significance? For here is a Negro story which overtly pictures his enemies as white. And the white man has been his authority figure against whom he has been rebelling. But here he achieves that greater act of rebellion, the turning of his back. This is then something of a declaration of independence.

Then we have here three different conceptions of the hero among these young negroes. Yet there is one aspect that unites them: All are protest heroes, and all of them exhibit their reaction in comic, in joking terms. This is, of course, appropriate in a situation of this sort. The joker hero is no less a redeemer than any other. He simply brings about his vivification through comedy and derision rather than through catharsis. This is because comedy is a social matter, tragedy more of an individual one. Furthermore, as Wylie Sypher says:

The comic perspective can be reached only by making game of "serious" life. The comic rites are necessarily impious, for comedy is sacrilege as well as release.<sup>17</sup>

The joker is the fool in modern guise, because through his banter he is exhibiting the divine efficacy of the questioner. All of these heroes are questioning (by their actions) at the same time as they are exhibiting and teaching. He is puncturing absurdities as inequities.

Once again, it is "Shine's" questioning that transcends the limitations of the inherent questions of the Monkey and "Stack." "Stack's" comic approach is to show the absurdity of white man's morality by his brutality, almost a reversion when looked upon in civilization's terms. "Shine," on the other hand, rises above this, questioning white man's values by laughing in his face and, psychologically and physically, providing for himself.

However, we must resist trying to make too much out of this one story. It is, in the first place, atypical. Secondly, the tone of the story is pronouncedly defiant in a chest-pounding way, and the note on which it ends is derisive.

When news got to Washington that the  
great Titanic had sunk

Shine was standing on the corner  
already one-half drunk.

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<sup>17</sup>Sypher, Wylie.

Along with this toast of overt rebellion have come a number of other stories that are also openly reacting against the white's actions of dominance. Competition between Negro and white on the narrative level has emerged from the trickster and tricked level to one in which the terms and ideas are much less veiled.

In the narrative then, we see much the same struggle that we have noticed in our discussion of the sociological and historical backgrounds and in the comments on the growth of verbal skills. But through the narrative we can begin to see a great shift of emphasis which if broadened could have significant implications on the folklore of the Negro.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### GAMES

The Camingerly children, like any others, are capable of investing any object, area, action, with a significance quite beyond its apparent values. Any place is a potential playground and any set of actions a potential game. Whenever a set of actions is repeated in a "game" way, it becomes a folklore, or something very akin to it.

The street, that place in which most of the spare time of these children is spent, is the greatest source of inspiration for games. On the sidewalks and street are drawn the mystic lines that proclaim the sacred battlefield of "dead box" or "hopscotch." The markings of the sidewalk announce the rules of the battle:

Step on a crack,  
Your mother drinks wax.  
Step on a line,  
Your mother drinks wine.  
Step on a block,  
I see a cop.  
Step on a crack,  
Break your back.

The players are semi-divine because they are not only playing out the game but they are also proclaiming the rules as suits their fancy. The game of "tag" somehow becomes more significant when the children find a large circle painted in the schoolyard and invest it with the powers of "home base," where they are immune from attack. In the same way, on the suggestion of one of the players, "home base" becomes a doorstep down the street, and what most people would think to be a useful method of ingress and egress at an otherwise modest house suddenly emerges as the center of safety in a fearful contest.

Somehow, all of the fearful parts of life when acted out in the child's game become manageable; the awful idea of venturing from the comfort of home, or the terrible dread of being pursued, remain under control when encompassed in play. Perhaps it is because so many of the situations are thus acted out and prepared for that the child is able to emerge into the more chaotic life.

Somehow, just as in life, a basic difference in sexes begins to exert itself in play. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the contest element in play looms much larger in boys than girls games. This is most strongly felt in those games in which "it" plays a central role. The girls games, are for the most part, based on the "it" role being a desirable one which is assumed by each participant at some time during the game and where she has full control of the game. We can, after Gump and Sutton-Smith,<sup>1</sup> categorize these as "ritual dramatic games" (high status positions involve "social direction"; i. e. calling, chanting, signaling the movements of game by "it") and its close relative "skill dramatic games" (high status position, those who call turn while the others compete for position). An example of the first in this collection is "Old Mommy Witch," of the second, "Red Light." Such games, in having a 'director' role, which is passed from one player to another, echoes the egalitarian concept which also can be seen in the primary pattern of the singing games (one girl in center of a ring, performing, the picking successor). Here, too, the equivalent of the "it" role is passed around the group freely.

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<sup>1</sup>Sutton-Smith, Brian, and Paul Gump, "The 'It' Role in Children's Games," The Group, 17:3-8.

On the other hand, the boys games, echoing their preoccupation with 'contest,' fit into the "skill game" category (status usually achieved by counting out, which is insistence on equality of game at beginning; re-allocation of status by success or failure in the skill called into play by game). In these games all of the group are against the one chosen as "it." The "it" role may either be as ruler or pariah. In games such as "tag" the "it" role is one to be avoided, and is achieved by defeat; in many of the ball games it is desirable and arrived at through triumph. In such games as "Hide and Go Seek" the role, which by its isolation and task would seem to be undesirable, becomes somewhat less so because of its challenge and chance to demonstrate skill. To some extent all of the pariah "it" situations have some of this attraction.

The games in this chapter will be divided into boys and girls games, though in fact some of them defy such distinction. Most of the girls games are at one time or another joined by the boys. Some boys games, like "Hide and Go Seek" are often joined by the girls. The groupings have been executed by judging who played the games most prevalently. Viewed in this way, none of the games was really difficult to categorize. Within this over-all categorization the games will be roughly grouped by the kind of skill (or chance) exhibited as the raison d'etre for the activity. As these games are all played by the age group 7 to 12-14 there will be no attempt to group them by age, but where the activity is carried on by those over or under these limits, notice will be taken in the head-note.

It is difficult to estimate the extent to which organized school and playground activity has influenced the games of these children. In

investigating the activities of the so-called 'organized play-periods' of the schools in this area, very little real teacher direction was observed. The teachers seem to be satisfied if the children will play in a semi-restrained fashion. This does not rule out the possibility that some of these games were learned from recreation directors or gym teachers. I have tried to guard myself against this by making it clear to the children that I was not interested in anything which they had learned from a teacher. There were many times when some children were eager to add something to the collection and attempted to slip something by of this nature, but here the other children served as the best monitor, for they were just as anxious to show each other's achievements as worth nothing and therefore, when one of these items would come up, someone would inevitably call the culprit on his error. For the most part, I have restricted the items included here to those actually observed on the street or undirected playground. Many items, however, are the sort that are taught in school classes, etc.

Though some of these games are encountered for the first time so far as folklore scholarship can account, most of them bear the stamp of the Anglo-American tradition rather than anything specifically Negro or African. Even those games which have never been collected before bear to a great extent the imprint of the common forms of Anglo-American games. The one possible exception to this is to be found among the singing games where the rhythmic effect of many of the songs are definitely Negro in feeling and the games seem to be Negro in origin, though once again their general form is dictated by some games also collected among whites. This is, however, not unique among this group of Negroes. Puckett notices

that in the South, "Most of the games played by Negro children are probably of English origin, since they are the same as those played by white children of the South and North" (pp. 54-5).

In investigating the games which were played by the members of the community of the former generations, an amazing consistency seemed to exist. Most of my informants in the age group 16-35 had played most of the games encountered here, and could only think of a few other games which they had played which are no longer played by these children. Foremost of these games involve choosing of sides ("Red Light," "Prisoner's Base," "Capture the Flag"), but such games had been played by those who had spent time in the country (usually in the South), and had been played by young adolescents rather than the children. Such games have disappeared because the city doesn't afford the proper playing area, and because organized games such as softball, baseball, basketball are the games in which the youths are most interested. The doings of the gangs bear a definite relation to "Prisoner's Base" or "Capture the Flag," as well, but with more consequential intent; it is this activity, more than others, that accounts for the disappearance of such games.

Many of the older members of the community could remember playing other singing games than those presented here, but none could remember specifically which ones. They all seemed to agree that many of the ones played by the children were not brought from the South but were learned here. Pointed out in this way were "This is the Way," "Puncinello," and "Looby Loo." On the other hand, most of them remembered playing "Sally Waters" and "London Bridges" among the Anglo-American games as well as

"There Stands a Bluebird." One informant thought that such games as "Buzz" and "Ring Rose" were recent inventions.

### Counting-out and Choosing

The following counting-out rhymes constitute the major way in which the choosing of "it" is done in this area. Contrary to the practice in most groups which I have otherwise observed, the counting is not done by extended hands, or by pointing to individuals in the circle. Rather, the children make the circle and each spreads his legs until each of his feet touch the adjacent ones of the people on either side. Then one in the group gets down on his knees and proceeds to count out the rhyme on the feet of the players, including his own. Usually, when the last number is counted, everyone scatters in games of tag.

There are a number of other ways in which choosing was achieved. The methods of choosing for "Hide and Seek" are included in the description of that game. The most common way of starting an "it" game (i.e. where one person has to be separated from the rest) is for someone to say, "not it for stoop tag" (for instance), and everyone else follows suit, the last one to say it being "it." Another way is for someone to say "last one to the corner is 'it' for stoop tag," and then a race for the corner ensues. These are sometimes started by the ways of starting other foot races:

One for the money,  
Two for the show,

Three to make ready,  
Four to GO.<sub>2</sub>

or

Ready!  
Get set!  
GO!

The method of choosing teams is, of course, quite different. Most often, two are chosen as "captains," and they proceed to go through some sort of ritual to establish who should make first choice for their side. Probably, the most common way of doing this is for one of the captains to choose "odds" or "evens." Then they proceed to throw fingers, each permitted to throw one or two, and if the result when counted is an odd number then the captain who had chosen "odds" gets first choice.

# I

Though perhaps the most common counting-out rhyme in the United States, it was not the most frequently used in the neighborhood. It is often encountered with variant third and fourth lines, "If he holler, make him pay/Fifty dollars every day." The Opies (ODNR) relate the first and last lines to the Anglo-Cymric method of counting, and indicate in passing the possibility of it being the vestige of something even older. Charles Frances Potter, on the other hand (Opie gives the reference), in an article in Harper's Bazaar, traces it to a French Canadian game, "Meeny, meeny, miney, mo/Cache ton poing derriere ton dos." Bolton has the earliest version of this rhyme, though there are phonetic relatives which go much farther back.

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<sup>2</sup>For other reportings of this rhyme 'see Bolton, 119 (N.Y., Tenn., Conn.); Botkin, 778 (from Johnson[WTSNE]); Brown I, 170 (N.C.); HF, 8:11; Halliwell, 61; JAF, 60:37; 63:432; Opie (ODNR), 332-3; Wood, (AMG), 96.

AA (o.s.), 274 (D.C.); Brown I, 162 (N.C.); Bolton, 46, 104-6; Davis (FSV), 222 (Va.) (mentioned); Douglas, 44 (London); FL, 16:451 (Argyle-shire); Fauset, 128 (Nova Scotia); Ford (CRGSS), 39; Gullen, 14; HF, 8:8 (Ind., Tenn., N.J., Montreal, Penn., Me.); Holbrook, 121; Hudson (SFM), 116 (Miss.); JAF, 1:33, 31:42, 150 (Ontario), 32:377 (Va.), 40:36 (Ohio); Johnson (FCSHI), 165 (S.C.) (Catcha neighbor by 'e toe); Linscott, 5; Lippincott's Magazine, 37:250 (D.C.); Opie (ODNR), 156-7, O'Suilleabhain, 681 (Ireland); SFQ I, #4, 54 (Nebr.); 3:179, 17:247 (Ark.); Sutton-Smith, 62 (N.Z.); WF, 7:52; Withers (COR), n.p.; Withers, 83.

## A

Eeny, meeny, miny, mo..  
 Catch a nigger by the toe,  
 If he hollars, let him go,  
 Eeny, meeny, miny, mo.  
 A bottle of ink  
 Will make you stink.  
 Y O U  
 My mother told me to choose this one.  
 Right over here.

## B

Eeny, meeny, miny, mo,  
 Catch a pigeon (nigger) by the toe.  
 He he hollars let him go.  
 My mother tells me to choose this one,  
 Right over here.

## II

This is not an unusual opening, see Bolton, 107; also Whitney and Bullock, (Md.) 134-5. The middle section is similar to a rhyme, Whitney and Bullock, 133; also see rhyme on page 237.

Eeny, meeny, tipsy, teeny,  
 Turpentine, make it shine.  
 Nineteen hundred and ninety-nine.  
 Out goes a rat.  
 Out goes a cat.  
 Out goes a lady with a seesaw hat.  
 My mother told me to choose this one,  
 Right over here.



## III

These are done by each person holding out fists, each fist being counted as a "potato."

Gullen, 32; HF, 8:9 (Ill., Ind., Ky., Me., N.Y.); Holbrook, 123; JAF, 31:522 (Mich.); 40:36-7 (Ohio); SFQ, I, #4, 47 (Nebr.); Sutton-Smith, 68 (N.Z.); WF, 7:52; 12:23 (N.Z.); Withers (COR), n.p.; Withers (RIP), 84.

## A

One potato, two potato, three potato, four,  
Five potato, six potato, seven potato, more.

## B

One potato, two potato (up to ten potato).  
The tenth is the rotten potato and is "it."

## IV

This rhyme is performed as much as a jump-rope rhyme as a counting-out verse, but has not been so encountered here.

Bolton, 111; Brown, 168 (N.C.); Hale, 260 (N.Y.); Hudson (SMF), 116; JAF, 31:44, 150 (Ont.); 31:531; 40:36 (Ohio); 63:429 (Mich.); Newell, 203; SFQ, I, #4, 56 (Nebr.), 180; Smith, 17; Sutton-Smith, 69 (N.Z.); Whitney and Bullock, 138; Withers (COR), n.p.; Wood (FAFR), 53.

## A

Engine Engine number nine,  
Riding down the Chicago line,  
If the engine jump the track,  
Who me?  
Not me.  
Then who?  
You.

## B

Engine, engine, number nine,  
Riding down the trolley line  
If the engine jump the track  
Would you get your money back?  
Y E S spells yes.  
And you are not it.

## V

This is the most common counting-out rhyme in the neighborhood, along with VI. Halliwell, 77 (also found in Opie (ODNR), 315, and other places mentioned there), has an interesting verse, similar to this that may come from a common ancestor (along with the common jump-rope rhyme which begins, "My mother, your mother, lives across the way).

Botkin (TAF), 797 (from the New Yorker, 8:33); Brown, 166; Hale, 29 (jump-rope rhyme); JAF, 30:533; 31:47 (Ont.); 31:274 (Mass.); 31:533-4 (Mich.); 40:37 (Ohio); 42:305 (Mass.); Philadelphia Evening Ledger, May 17, 1916 (N.J.); SFQ, 1, #4, p. 55 (Nebr.); 3:178-181; 17:248 (Ark.); Sutton-Smith, 70; WF, 12:23 (N.Z.); Withers (COR), n.p.; Withers (RIP), 85.

My mother and your mother was washing some clothes.  
My mother socked (punched) your mother right there in the nose.  
What color was her blood?  
Red, R-E-D spells red,  
And you are not it.

## VI

This is a not-too-distant cousin of the previous rhyme.

Tarzan was in the tree and he fell out.  
What color was his blood?  
Red, R-E-D spells red,  
And you are not it.

## VII

Piggy bank, piggy bank,  
Got so much money.  
Piggy bank, piggy bank,  
Lost all his money.  
(Whoever lost the money is "it.")

## VIII

Patsy, patsy, running down the hill,  
A wolf caught her in the front of the heel.  
Ran so fast that the wolf couldn't catch her.  
He went in the grandmother's to eat the cookies up.  
When she got there, she couldn't have none.  
So her grandmother had five-cent on her,  
And gave it to her.

## Girls Games

### Games Dependent on Individual Dexterity

#### Jacks

As Gomme points out (I, 239), the game is very ancient, known Greek times, and widespread, being found throughout the world and especially in the Far East. They were originally played with the dried vertebrae of sheep, and in this guise called "Hucklebones"; in this form five bones were generally utilized. In other forms of the game pebbles are used. The common form of the game today is with the factory-made cast iron, six-pronged "jacks," whose form undoubtedly derives from the vertebrae construction.

For descriptions of the various games see AA (o.s.) I:269-70 (D.C.); Balfour and Thomas, 105 (Northumberland); Brown I, 83 (N.C.) (references to foreign analogues); Brewster, 137-42 (Ind., Ark.) (discussion of origins and foreign analogues); Earle, 376; FLJ, 2:226; Gomme, I:66, 95, 122, 239, 259 (from Halliwell's Dictionary, London, and other diverse parts of Great Britain); Gutch, 145 (Yorksh.); Holbrook, p. 75 (discussion of distribution); Hyatt, 176 (Ind.); Johnson (EPG), 115; LaSalle, 62; MacLagan, 66-77 (Argyleshire), Mason and Mitchell, 117; N & Q, 9th Series, 4:378, 379; Newell, 190 (Mass.); Sutton-Smith, p. 129; WF 17:34 (Australia).

The game as it is played in the Camingerly area is just as it is described in Brewster, 137-8. Ten jacks are used and a rubber ball. The game begins with one player throwing the jacks on the playing surface. Then the ball is thrown in the air and the player must pick up one jack without moving any of the others while the ball drops, and then the ball must be caught on the bounce. All ten must be picked up in this way. This is called "onesies." Then the process is repeated only picking up two at a time, and this is called "twosies." This proceeds until all ten must be picked up, and this is called "allsies." A 'miss' is brought about by missing the correct number of jacks, the ball, or knocking a jack that is not picked up. At completion of "allsies" you put jacks in

your palm, throw them up, and attempt to catch them on the back of your hand. Then throw them up and catch them again in your palm. If all are caught another game is added to score. Each time one reaches "allsies" a game is scored and you receive a chance to gain this additional score. Once you have reached "allsies" once, you start the game again, not at the beginning, but at the number of jacks which you are able to catch on the palm-back of hand maneuver. In other words, if seven are caught in this fashion the player starts toward ten with "sevensies."

There are a number of variations of this pattern. The game can be played the same way only with the left hand. "Chinese Jacks" involves the same movements, but when the ball is thrown the jacks must be both picked up and put in the other hand before the ball is caught. "Sponge" is played the same way except that when the jacks are picked up they must be dropped again before the ball is caught. None of the games was collected which involved a different movement and different name for each series. Often at the end of a game the children would say:

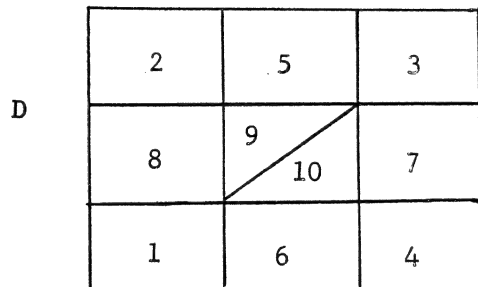
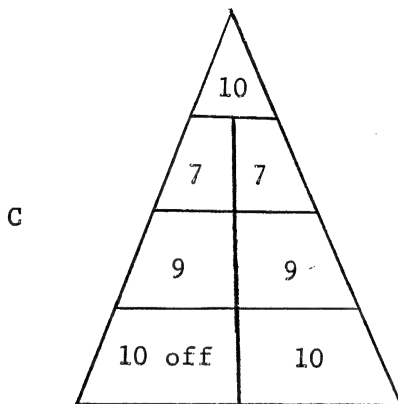
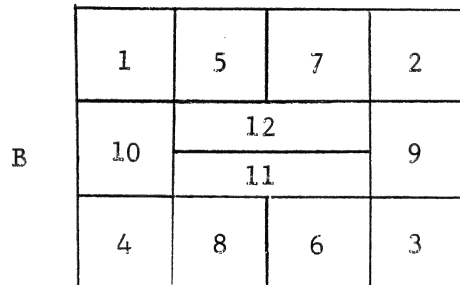
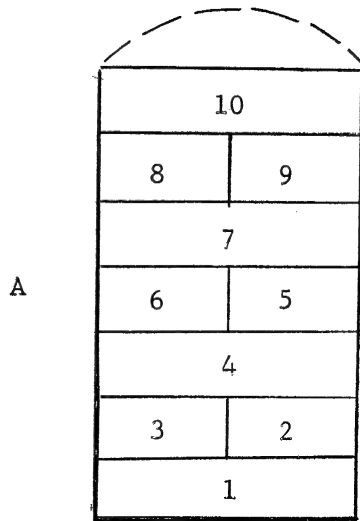
I win the game,  
I win the game,  
I hope I win another game.

### Hopscotch

This game is very old and widespread. Lady Gomme mentions that "Mr. Elsworth (West Somerset Words) says, 'Several of these (diagrams marked on the ground) are still to be seen scratched on the ancient pavement of the Roman Forum.'" Brewster gives a number of foreign analogues in his notes in both the Brown Collection and American Non-singing Games. The objective of the game always has seemed to have been the same; the throwing of an object into a specific area and the retrieving of it by following a prescribed hopping path, or the kicking of an object while hopping along the hopping path. This path is generally indicated by a diagram which is scratched into the ground or chalked onto the street.

The patterns of this diagram are almost limitless in their variety. (For an amusing argument over the "proper" pattern for hopscotch, see The Saturday Evening Post, Editorial page, February 13 and March 21, 1960.)

For descriptions of various games involved see the following: AA (o.s.), I:230 (D.C.); Balfour and Thomas, 106 (Northumberland); Boyd, 23; Brewster, 107-115 (Tenn., Mo., Ia., Ind., Okla.) (discussion of origin theories, foreign analogues); Brown I, 39 (N.C.); Creighton, 73 (Nova Scotia); Daiken, 41-49; Earle, 342; FL, 16:341-3; Gomme, I, 223 (discussion of origins and distribution); Holbrook, 72-5; JAF, 4:229 (N.Y.); Johnson (EPG), 113; LaSalle, 72-3; Lippincott's Magazine, 38:337; MacLagan, 134 (Argyleshire); Manual, 75-6; Marran, 70-3; Mason and Mitchell, 119, N & Q, 4th series, 4:94, 186; Newell, 188 (discussion of foreign analogues); Spence, 88-9 (from Gomme); Strutt, 303; Sutton-Smith, 36 (N.Z.).



As can be seen by the number of diagrams, "hopscotch" is played by the Camingerly children in a number of ways. The most common form is that found played with diagram A. The player throws an object into the square (going in rote order from 1 to 10), hops from 1 in rote until she reaches the square into which she has thrown the object. She must then lean down and pick up the object and get back to the outside by finishing the route to 10 and returning in reverse rote. She is only allowed to have one foot touch the ground throughout the circuit, and that foot is not allowed to touch any of the lines. The object which is thrown must land fully in the box. The one who is able to do the circuit from 1 to 10 (and sometimes, also, in reverse order) is the winner of the game. The object thrown often has a magical quality invested in it by the player, and many of the players keep special objects for this purpose from game to game.

A major variation of the above game is played exactly the same way, except that when the jumper reaches the doubled squares (2 and 3, 5 and 6, 8 and 9) she puts down both feet, one in each square.

Diagram B is used for a game that is unlike the classic hopscotch game as it uses no thrown object. It is merely a game of jumping dexterity, and is included here because the children call it hopscotch. The player must jump from box 1 to box 12 and back again without touching a line. In order to win, one must hop through the course first on the right leg, then on the left leg, and then with both feet.

Diagram C involves a course that is considerably smaller than the others. An object is thrown into the squares, first the 9's and then the 7's. The player is allowed to hop only in the right 10 and the 9's

and 7's. If she touches any of the others she is disqualified. She must pick up the object as in the first-recorded game on diagram A. This game was only encountered once and then from a group of seven- and eight-year-olds. It looks as if the course is an adaptation of a shuffleboard court, and that the hopping was done by scoring positive and negative points as written on the diagram, but these children did not play it that way.

Diagram D involves games much like the ones already described. The one most commonly played is like that of B, a jumping in rote order on the right foot, then left foot, and then with both. A second game is played like that in Diagram A; that is, throwing an object into the squares in rote order, etc.

### Ball-bouncing Games

For some reason, there was very little ball-bouncing done by the girls in the neighborhood, and, consequently, few games involving the bouncing of the ball to establish rhythm have been collected. Even these were encountered rarely. There is no discernible reason why this situation should exist as the children did have rubber balls to play with.

Three of the games collected are the sort that involve the repetition of a rhyme which echoes the rhythm of the ball. The object of most of these was for the individual bouncing the ball to keep it up as long as possible, or until the end of the rhyme was achieved. In the first, the element of competition arose because scoring was done by the number to which the player could bounce.

## I

CFQ, 1:252 (Cal.) (jump-rope rhyme); JAF, 60:46, (Mo.); MF, 9, 2:83; New York Times Magazine, April 14, 1946; WF, 3:279 (Cal.); 14:13 (Cal.) (jump-rope rhyme); Withers, 62.

Hello, hello, hello, sir,  
 Meet me at the grocer.  
 No sir, why sir?  
 Because I have a cold, sir.  
 Where'd you get the cold, sir?  
 From the North Pole, sir.  
 What do you do there, sir?  
 Catch a polar bear, sir.  
 How many did you catch, sir?  
 One, sir, two, sir, three, sir,  
 etc.

## II

See act-out rhyme, page 173.  
 Hale, 247; WF, 14:12 (Cal.); Withers, 52.

A sailor went to sea,  
 To see what he could see.  
 And all that he could see,  
 Was the bottom of the deep blue sea.

## III

This game involves more than one player. On the Y-O-U, the ball is passed to another player, who must, without catching the ball, continue the bouncing.

Withers, 64.

Indian, Indian, lived in a tent.  
 He has no money to pay his rent.  
 He borrows one, he borrows two,  
 He passes it over to Y-O-U.



## IV

The players in this game stand on the steps of a house. The first throws a ball into 1. She must then catch it before it has rolled out of that box, or even touches the line. Then she must bounce the ball once in every box and catch it. Then she gets back on the step and throws the ball into box 2. If she can get it before it leaves the box or touches the line, then she has to bounce the ball twice in every box and so on. While bouncing, the player has to stay in the box in which she has captured the ball. Often the game was made more complicated by having to do a certain motion while bouncing the ball.

See Creighton, 73 (Nova Scotia) for a similar game.

4	5	6	_____
			_____
			Steps _____
3	2	1	_____

## Jump-rope

Though mention of jumping-rope goes back some time, as an intricate and widespread girls activity it is fairly recent, probably beginning in fashion somewhere around the turn of the last century. Various games and accompanying rhymes have been reported, in both popular and scholarly journals. See: Bett (GOC), 55; Brewster, 118-19 (Ind.); Daiken, 57-71; Gomme II, 200-04; Holbrook, 54; JAF, 60:1-51 (Mo.); 61, 53-67; LaSalle, 72; Strutt, 383 (early account of skipping as boys' sport); TFSB, #12, 18 (mentions some games and stunts) (Tenn.); Time Magazine, May 29, 1950, 19-20; WF, 14:3ff. (Cal.) (description and classification).

This activity accounts for a great deal of the play time of girls from 5 to 12, or 13 (and occasionally boys). The variety of different games and rhymes which one can hear connected with jumping rope has never ceased to amaze me.

There are three ways of jumping. Singly, one person turns the rope over her own head and jumps; no rhymes are connected with this, only counting by ones or fives as far as you can get without missing. There can be a great deal of skill connected with this method because of the variety of styles of jumping: skipping, hopping on one foot, flatfooted, etc.

The second way is by tying the rope to something. Then there is need for one "ender," or person to turn the rope for the counting of rhymed games which follow. The third way is, of course, with two "enders," and is the most common type.

There are two ways in which the "enders" are chosen originally. The most common is simply by everyone shouting, "first no enders," and the last ones who do so are thus chosen. The second way is by doubling the rope over and passing it down the line until someone can't double it any longer. After the game starts, anyone who misses becomes an "ender."

In the games with two "enders," there are three standard ways of turning the rope: "singles," "Double-Dutch" (rope is doubled, the two parts turned alternately overhand by the "enders"), and "Irish" or "Double-Irish" (the same as "Double-Dutch" only overhand, and much more difficult). The most common game for all of them is plain counting games. For "singles" the counting is done usually by tens for as long as one can go without missing. For "Double-Dutch" and "Irish," the counting goes by twos to ten, over and over again, in the pattern 2-4-6,8-10; 2-4-6,8-20, etc. Sometimes, the game ends at fifty, at which time the last two turns are single rather than double, the switch being difficult to make.

Many of the games are such that more than one person can jump them at the same time. It is possible to see three or four girls jumping to the same rhyme, but the one who misses gets abuse heaped on her. As in the singing games, there is great emphasis on individuals doing dance steps and other difficult feats. Wiggling, doing the rumba, touching your toes, going "up and down the ladder" (jumping toward one end and then back away toward the other, often jumping backward), "pepper" (jumping while the rope is turned faster), and hopping are just a few of the number of steps that are done during these rhymes. It will be noticed that many of them are mentioned in the rhymes themselves. The most recently invented rhymes, the last three, are especially difficult from the point of view of these motions.

Another sort of game much like jumping rope found its way into the neighborhood some time late in 1959. This was another game of agility played by girls called "Indian Jumping." The actions to it were that thick rubber bands were tied to each other in about an eight or ten foot circle, and two "enders" put their legs inside the circle and pulled it so that there were two parallel lines of bands. The jumper then did a pattern of foot movements while saying any of the jump-rope rhymes, especially the ones that called for actions. The pattern was first to put the foot between the parallel strands, and then to put it out, under the first strand and over the second (this was possible because of the great pliancy of the long row of bands). This action was alternated until missed, as in jumping rope.

The two games, jumping rope and "Indian Jumping" require a great deal of agility, and the Negro children in this neighborhood had more

than their share of this facility, and took great delight in demonstrating it.

### Jump-rope Rhymes

#### I

This is one of the most ubiquitous of American folk rhymes, usually existing for its own entertainment value, though it has been collected as a jump-rope, ball-bouncing, and counting-out rhyme. It's most common form is the first four lines of the present version.

Botkin (TAF), 803 (from the New Yorker); Brown, I, 171 (N.C.); Ford (TMA), 442 (as a verse in a song); Hyatt, 646 (Ill.); JAF, 44:434 (S.C.); 58:125 (N.Y.); 60:27 (Mo.); 60:48 (Mo.); 61:55 (N.C.); LaSalle, 71; Lomax (OSC), 72-3; New Yorker, Nov. 13, 1937, p. 39; Talley, 116; WF, 7:18; White, 249 (Ala.); Whitney and Bullock, 154 (Md.); Withers (RIP), 8; Wood (AMG), 19; Wood (MGO), n.p. (Ozarks).

My father gave me fifty cents,  
To see the elephant jump the fence.  
He jumped so high, he touched the sky,  
He couldn't come back till the June or 'ly.  
My sister took and cried so hard,  
Cried until December.  
But her father said that was nothing,  
So come on and eat the dinner.

#### II

This is the same rhyme as I with the addition of the opening four lines. These lines come from a riddle, the answer of which is "a coffin" (see Taylor, 234).

For other references to this as a rhyme, see Brown I, 294 (N.C.); Bolton, 117 (Pa.) (with "I love coffee" as a counting-out rhyme); Hale, 65 (N.Y.) (with "I love coffee"); JAF, 39:83 (N.Y.); 60:27 (Mo.); 60:41 (Mo.); Lomax (OSC), 72-3 (as handclapping game); MW, 3:81 (Ozarks). See this also as a handclapping rhyme, page 234.

Oh, Mary Mack, Mack, Mack,  
All dressed in black, black, black,

With silver buttons, buttons, buttons  
 All down her back, back, back.  
 She asked her mother, mother, mother,  
 For fifty cents, cent, cent,  
 To see the elephant, elephant, elephant,  
 Jump the fence, fence, fence.  
 He jumped so high, high, high,  
 He touched the sky, sky, sky.  
 He never came back, back, back,  
 To the fourth of July, 'ly, 'ly.  
 She went home crying, crying, crying,  
 To her mother, mother  
 She told a lie, lie, lie,  
 To her mother.

### III

See Singing Games, page 148.

Here come Uncle Jessie  
 Riding thru the woods  
 And silver horse and buckles  
 And buckles on his shoes.  
 Now if he was a fella  
 I tell you what to do.  
 Just put some salt and pepper  
 And put it in your shoe.  
 All gone girl, shake that sugar (sung)  
 All gone girl, shake that sugar.  
 Shake it to the East  
 Shake it to the West  
 Shake it to the very one  
 That you love the best.

### IV

The usual version of this is "Down the Mississippi where the boats go push." The jumpers line up; the first one jumps while rhyme is given; on the words "push" the second jumps in and pushes the first out. The process continues until all are finished and often the line is continuous with the jumpers going to the end of the line or forming a new line on the other side.

Evans 6 (Cal.); Hale, 171 (N.Y.); Withers (RIP), 6.

Down the Mississippi where the green grass grows,  
 Push, push, push.

## V

The jumper must make the motions mentioned in the rhyme; saluting, bowing, turning, hopping.

Monitor Magazine, April 9, 1949, p. 8.

## A

Little girl, little girl, dressed in blue,  
Here are the things you ought to do.  
Salute to the captain, bow to the queen.  
Turn on your tiptoes and twirl around.  
Little girl, little girl, dressed in blue.  
Here are the second things you ought to do.  
Hop on one foot as fast as you can.  
One, two, three (and out).

## B

I am a little Dutch girl,  
Dressed in blue.  
These are the orders  
I'se susposed to do.  
Salute to the captain (salute)  
Bow to the queen (bow)  
Turn my back  
On the dirty submarine.  
1 by 1,  
2 by 2,  
etc.

## VI

This rhyme is used to determine who the jumper is going to marry. If she missed on September, for instance, that is when his birthday is.

Daiken, 71; Douglas, 50 (London); Hale, 120 (N.Y.); Holbrook, 56; JAF, 58:350 (N.H.); Sutton-Smith, 75 (N.Z.); Withers, 60.

All in together,  
This is fairy (stormy) weather (such a stormy weather),  
January, February, March,  
April, May, June, July,  
August, September, December.

What day was you born on,  
 The first, the second, the third, etc.  
 What day was you born on,  
 Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, etc.

## VII

One person jumps, names another who jumps in the second time;  
 third time, number one jumps out when number three jumps in.

AA (OS), 251 (D.C.) (in a game); Bolton, 117 (Pa.) (as counting-out rhyme with "Mary Mack"); Botkin (TAF), 791 (from SFQ 3:174), 99 (from New Yorker); Daiken, 33; Evans, 14 (Cal.); HF, 8:10 (Ind.); Hale, 64 (N.Y.); Halliwell, 7; Lippincott's Magazine, 38:328 (D.C.); Lomax (OSG) 72 (similar rhyme); JAF, 28:186 (Miss.); 39:84 (N.Y.); 42:219-20 (Ozarks); 60:27 (Mo.); 63:435 (Mo.); MWF, 3:77 (Ozarks); MacLagan, 186 (Argyle-shire); New Yorker, Nov. 13, 1937, p. 36 (N.Y.); Richardson, 53 (as ending for "Paper of Pins"); SFQ I, #4:50 (Nebr.); 3:174 (Ind.); Sutton-Smith, 79 (N.Z.); Talley, 81, 84-5 (similar game-rhyme); WF, 8:128 (Colo.); 14:19 (Cal.).

I like coffee  
 And I like tea.  
 I like Chuckie to jump with me.  
 And a one, two, three, and a (out).

## VIII

On "red hot pepper" the rope is turned faster. The object of the game is to see who can jump the longest time during "pepper."

Botkin (TAF), 792 (from SFQ 3:325); CFQ, 1:249 (Cal.); Evans, 21 (Cal.); Folkways #7029 (Ill.); Hale, 103 (N.Y.); JAF, 47:384 (Pa.); MWF, 3:79 (Ozarks); Monitor Magazine, April 9, 1949, p. 8; Sutton-Smith, 76 (N.Z.); WF, 8:129 (Colo.); 14:9-10 (Cal.); Withers (RIP), 60; Wood (FAFR), 99.

Mabel, Mabel, set the table,  
 Don't forget the red hot pepper.  
 1, 2, 3, etc.

## IX

This a jump that allows you to pick which way you want the rope turned. "D" stands for "Double-Dutch," "I" for "Irish," "S" for "single turn," "H" for "hop," and "choice" is for any of the previous four. The one you miss on is the one you must do.

D I S H, choice  
 D I S H, choice  
 D I S H, choice  
 H O P, hop  
 1, 2, 3.

## X

Daiken, 70 (Keep the kettle boilin'); Hale, 171 (N.Y.); JAF, 42:306 (Mass.); WF, 14:10 (Cal.).

## A

Kittie cat a bawlin,  
 And hurry up late,  
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and a  
 1, 2, 3, 4, and a  
 1, 2, 3, and a  
 1, 2, and a  
 1, and a  
 zero.

## B

Tea kettle a boilin,  
 Hurry up it's late  
 And a 1, 2, 3, etc.

## C

Kitty kettle a boiler  
 Hurry up a lake  
 And a 1, 2, 3, etc.

## XI

For the rhyme as found in XI-A, see WF, 7:52-3. The additions in XI-B come from what is usually a different and autonomous rhyme, for which see:



Botkin (TAF), 792 (from SFQ 3:174); Daiken, 80; Douglas, 38 (London); Fauset, 128 (Nova Scotia); JAF, 39:85 (N.Y.); 42:306 (Ozarks); Opie (LLS), 65 (a trick—"Do you like apples? Do you like pears? Do you like tumbling down the stairs?"); SFQ 3:174 (Ind.); WF, 7:52-3 (as hand-clapping game); 8:128 (Colo.); 14:17 (Cal.). See this also as a hand-clapping game, page 234.

## A

I am a little Dutch girl  
 As pretty as pretty can be.  
 And all the boys around my way  
 Are crazy over me.  
 My boyfriend Chiclet  
 He come from Alabam  
 With a pickle on his nose  
 And a big fat toe  
 That's the way my song goes.

## B

I am a crazy little Dutch girl,  
 As pretty as pretty can be,  
 And all the boys around my way  
 Go crazy over me.  
 My boyfriend name is Michael.  
 He comes from Alabama.  
 Boogs in his nose and big, fat toes,  
 And that's the way my story goes.  
 He gave me some peaches,  
 He gave me some pears.  
 He gave me a dirty kiss  
 And knocked me down the stairs.  
 I gave him back his peaches.  
 I gave him back his pears.  
 I gave him back his dirty kiss,  
 And knocked him down the stairs.  
 My mother need those peaches.  
 My mother need those pears.  
 My mother gave us a dirty kiss,  
 And knock us down the stairs.

## XII

Used for regular jumping or "Double-Dutch." The dance steps described are acted out while jumping. On last line, on word "hips" or "split," the jumper straddles the rope so that it stops. Next person then repeats actions.

Hale, 167 (N.Y.); Opie (LLS), 116 (similar concept); SFQ, 17:210; Time Magazine, May 29, 1950, p. 20.

## A

Postman, postman, do your duty,  
Here comes Susie just like a beauty.  
She can rumba, she can tango,  
She can do the strip.  
She can wear her dress above her hips.

## B

Policeman, policeman, do your duty.  
Here comes Adelaide the American beauty.  
She can wiggle, she can waggle,  
But she sure can do the split, split, split.

## XIII

As in the last game, the end is "split," where the jumper straddles the rope; also, the motions of wiggling are acted out while jumping.

Hale, 138 (N.Y.); Withers, 114.

## A

Anna Banana  
Played the piana,  
All she knew was the Star Spangled Banner.  
She wiggles, she woggles,  
And does the split,  
And when she misses, she misses like this.  
(straddle the rope)

## B

Banana, banana,  
Play the piana,  
All she knew was the Star Spangled Banner.  
Banana, banana split.

## XIV

This rhyme usually concerns other comic strip characters, "Toots and Caspar."

See Botkin (TAF), 802 (from the New Yorker); Hale, 22 (N.Y.); JAF, 63:431; New Yorker, Nov. 13, 1937, p. 39.

Blondie and Dagwood went downtown.  
Blondie bought an evening gown.  
Cookie bought a Daily News,  
And this is what I say to you.  
Close your eyes and count to ten.  
If you miss, you take the end.  
1, 2, 3, etc.

## XV

Another game for finding out the name of someone's love or future husband. It is to be encountered in many other similar forms.

Botkin (TAF), 793-4 (from SFQ, 3:176); CFQ, 1:250 (Cal.); Daiken, 70; Davis (FSV), 216 (Va.) (mentioned); Douglas, 27 (London); Evans, 8 (Cal.); Folkways, 7029 (Ill.); Hale, 43 (N.Y.); JAF, 40:42 (Ohio); 47:385 (Pa.); 52:121 (Iowa); 59:322 (N.C.); 63:431 (Mo.); MWF, 3:82 (Ozarks); Monitor Magazine, April 9, 1949, p. 8 (two variants); Opie (LLS), 236 (similar Valentine rhyme); SFQ, 3:176 (Ill.); Sutton-Smith, 78 (N.Z.); Trent-Jones, 26.

## A

Ice cream soda with the cherry on top.  
Tell me what's the initial of your sweetheart?  
A, B, C, D, etc.

## B

Ice cream soda, Delaware punch,  
Tell me the name of your honeybunch.  
A, B, C, etc.

## XVI

This is usually encountered as a counting-out rhyme. Some children, while jumping take it personally; i.e. if you miss on "yes" or "maybe so," you are laughed at because your father has been slurred.

Brown I, 168 (N.C.); Folkways, 7029 (Ill.); Hale, 28 (N.Y.); Hudson (SMF), 116 (Miss.); JAF, 3:533; 42:306 (Mass.); 60:41 (Mo.); SFQ, I, #4, 45 (Nebr.); 17, 245 (Ozarks); 3:178; Wood FAFR, 88.

Acka-backa, soda cracker.  
 Does your father chew tobacco?  
 Yes. No. Maybe so.  
 Yes. No. Maybe so.

## XVII

This is one of the oldest of still-played jump-rope rhymes, having been reported as far back as 1898 (Gomme). It has obvious affinities with the nursery rhyme, "Ladybird, Ladybird, fly away home," and, indeed, the rhyme is often found with ladybird or ladybug instead of Teddy Bear. This whole tradition is examined in JAF 60:65. The jumpers do the actions described, while continuing to jump.

Bancroft I, 171 (N.C.) (with "Last night, the night before"); Botkin (NEF), 907; Botkin (TAF), 791-2, 4 (from SFQ, 3:174, 6); CFQ, 1:248, 250 (Cal.); Daiken, 64; Davis (FSV), 216 (Va.) (mentioned); Douglas, 36 (London); Folkways, 7029 (Ill.); Gomme II, 204; HF, 2:49 (Ind.); 8:10, 11 (Ind.); Hale, 149 (N.Y.); JAF, 39:83 (N.Y.); 47:384-5 (Pa.); 52:120 (Iowa); 58:351 (N.H.); 60:50 (Mo.); 60:65 (discussion of relationship with other rhymes); 63:431 (Mo.); LaSalle, 71; MVF, 3:83; Monitor Magazine, April 9, 1949, p. 8; SFQ, 3:174 (Ill.); Sutton-Smith, 81 (N.Z.); WF, 8:127 (Colo.); 13:278-9 (Cal.); 14:12 (Cal.).

## A

Teddy bear, teddy bear, show your shoe, shoe.  
 Teddy bear, teddy bear, I love you.  
 Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch the ground, ground, ground.  
 Teddy bear, teddy bear, turn all around.  
 Teddy bear, teddy bear, one and two, two.  
 Teddy bear, teddy bear, I love you.

## B

Teddy bear, teddy bear, turn all around.  
 Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch the ground.  
 Teddy bear, teddy bear, show your shoe.  
 Teddy bear, teddy bear, take off your clothes.  
 Teddy bear, teddy bear, say your prayers.  
 Teddy bear, teddy bear, go to bed.

## XVIII

This originated as an autograph album rhyme. As such, it may be a parody of the rhyme, "1, 2, 3, 4, Mary at the cottage door. Eating cherries off a plate, 5, 6, 7, 8.

For similar rhyme see Withers, 61 and SFQ, 17:209 (Ozarks).

2, 4, 6, 8.  
 Don't make love at the garden gate.  
 Cause love is blind,  
 But the neighbors ain't.

# XIX

This rhyme obviously derives from the old singing game (see page 129). Withers, 66, also prints it as a jump-rope rhyme.

## A

Little Sally Ann  
 Sittin in a pan.  
 Weepin and a cryin  
 For a nice young man.  
 Rise, Sally, rise.  
 Wipe your dirty eyes  
 Turn to the East, turn to the West,  
 Turn to the very one that you love best.

## B

Little Sally Ann  
 Sitting in the sand.  
 Weepin for a nice young man  
 Close your eyes, Sally.  
 You can open them now.  
 There goes the man you want.

# XX

This is one of the most common jump-rope rhymes. Variant B, however, contains lines from two other rhymes. For the ones starting, "What's the matter, baby?" see the section on rhymes, page 215. For the lines beginning, "Don't get me," see Addy, 94 (Gypsy, gypsy, don't hurt me;/Heed yon girl behind yon tree.); Botkin (TAF), 791, 795 (from SFQ, 3:178); Brown I, 195 (N.C.); Bolton, 1123 (as counting-out rhymes); Hyatt, 655 (Ill.); JAF, 40:42 (Ohio); 60:35 (Mo.); 63:426 (Mo.); SFQ, 3:178 (Ind.); WF, 8:196 (Colo.); 14:127 (Cal.); Withers, 17; Wood (MGO), n.p. (Ozarks).

For the rhyme in its usual form see Botkin (TAF), 791 (from SFQ, 3:178); CFQ, 1:249 (Cal.); JAF, 42:305 (Mass.); 47:383 (Pa.); 52:122 (Iowa); 58:349; 59:321 (N.C.); 60:49 (Mo.); 61:60 (Tenn., N.C.); MWF, 3:79 (Ozarks); WF, 8:8 (Colo.); 13:279 (Cal.).

## A

Johnny on the ocean,  
Johnny on the sea,  
Johnny broke a cup,  
And blame it on me.  
I told Mama,  
Mama told Poppa,  
And Johnny got hahaha.

## B

Johnny on the ocean,  
Johnny on the sea,  
Johnny broke a cup  
And blame it on me.  
I told mama,  
And mama told papa,  
Johnny got a whoopin with a red-hot hopper.  
What's the matter, Johnny?  
A bee stung me.  
Where at, Johnny?  
On my knee.  
Whyn't you catch it, Johnny?  
It flew so fast.  
Johnny went upstairs to play his drums.  
He played so loud 'til the police come.  
Don't get me.  
Get that white man under the tree.  
He went to jail, just for fun.  
To see old Johnny play his drum.

## C

Johnny on the ocean,  
Johnny on the sea,  
Johnny broke a milk bottle  
And blame it on me.  
Mama told papa,  
Papa told sister  
Sister told brother  
And brother gave him  
The red-hot pepper.

## XXI

This is a poorly remembered version of the rhyme on page 179.

Botkin (NEF), 906-7; Botkin (TAF), 793 (from SFQ 3:176); Bolton, 117 (as counting-out rhyme); Brown I, 171 (N.C.); Evans, 23 (Cal); Folkways, 7029 (Ill.); Hale, 120 (N.Y.); Hudson (SFM), 117 (as counting-out rhyme for "Hide and Seek"); JAF, 40:69 (Ohio); 47:386 (Pa.); Opie (LLS), 23 (discussion); Odum and Johnson (NAHS), 185; SFQ, 1:61 (Nebr.); 3:176, 181 (Ind.); WF, 8:130 (Colo.); 14:14-15 (Cal.); Withers, 21.

Last night, the night before,  
I heard a knockin' at my door.  
I went downstairs to see who it is.  
Somebody hit me on top of my head.  
I said, "Louie, Louie, shut that door."  
I said, "Louie, Louie, come upstairs."  
I said, "Louie, Louie, get in this bed."

## XXII

For explanation of actions, see introduction to this section. See SFQ, 3:176 (Inc.) for a similar rhyme.

## A

Up the ladder,  
Down the ladder.  
One by one.  
Two by two.  
Three by three.  
(up to twenty)

## B

George Washington never told a lie,  
So he ran around the corner  
And stoled another pie.  
Up the ladder,  
Down the ladder.  
One by one.  
Two by two.  
Three by three.  
(to a hundred)

## XXIII

Hale, 67 (for beginning). See hand-clapping game, page 236.

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
 Children, too.  
 There's a little white girl  
 Going looking for you.  
 Hands up, torch-a-torch,  
 Hands down, torch-a-torch.  
 Two years old, going on three.  
 Wear my dresses upon my knee.  
 Sister has a boyfriend,  
 Comes every night,  
 Walks in the parlor  
 And turns out the lights.  
 Peep through the keyhole,  
 What did I see?  
 Johnny, Johnny, Johnny,  
 Put your arms around me.  
 Girls, girls, ready for a fight.  
 Here comes the girl with the skirt all tight.  
 She can wiggle, she can friggle,  
 She can do that stuff.  
 But I bet she can't do this. (pepper)

## XXIV

The following three rhymes are derived from listening to radio and television. Number XXIV is based loosely on an advertisement for Ballantine Beer which begins (to the same tune), "Hey, get your cold beer." Number XXV was a theme played by many rock-and-roll stations, and its form of play is very much like many of the singing games such as "Buzz" and "There Stands A Bluebird." Number XXVI is a parody of a rock-and-roll song popular in the fall of 1959.

Hey, everybody  
 Gather 'round Madison Town.  
 Like two up (skip forward)  
 Two back (skip backward)  
 False turn (turn)  
 Birdland, twice (jump, crossing feet)  
 Kick that bird (jump on one foot, kicking  
                   the other forward and back)  
 Then spit that bird.  
 (Start over and continue until a miss.)



## XXV

(To the tune of "London Bridge")

Rock-and-roll are here to stay,  
 Here to stay, here to stay.  
 Rock-and-roll are here to stay,  
 Now work out Cookie.  
 (The one jumping has to do some fancy step.)

You got to hip, ho, and a rocket one.  
 You got to hip, ho, and a rocket two.  
 (Etc. until miss.)

Also played with convention "London Bridge" first line.

## XXVI

See another version in chapter on Parodies, page

Dream lover, where are you?  
 Upstairs on the toilet stool.  
 Whatcha doing way up there?  
 Washing out my underwear.  
 How'd you get them so clean?  
 With a bottle of Listerine.  
 Where'd you get the Listerine?  
 From a can of pork and beans.  
 Where'd you get the pork and beans?  
 In the City of New Orleans.  
 How'd you get way down there?  
 'Cause I killed a polar bear.  
 Why'd you kill the polar bear?  
 'Cause he dirtied my underwear.  
 I want a dream lover,  
 Never have to dream alone.

Singing Games

(This section of games certainly belongs in the first category of girls games [those which demonstrate individual dexterity] though the organizational qualities of the next group are also present. For this reason they have been put separately between the two.)

Though, as many commentators have pointed out, the singing game does not have the same currency among children that it seems to have had in the past, I think that evidences in the following pages will show that it is definitely neither dead nor moribund. It is true that many of these games I only encountered once or twice, but some of them I saw being played many times.

I have arranged the games into two general groups, the first being games of international provenance and/or Anglo-American origin, and the second being games that seem to have been invented by the Negro. The games in the first section are a good deal more suspect than those of the second, for many of them seem very close to the sort of games taught school children in organized playground activity. I have included none, however, that I did not collect on the streets, and which the performers did not disclaim learning in school. This is not an infallible method, by any means, for the children knew that I did not want any such school-learned games and might have been fibbing to me. On this account, I did eliminate a number of games, such as "Did You Ever See A Lassie" and "The Muffin Man." The ones I finally decided to include were done because I felt that there was some significant change in them from the standard versions, and that this might have happened because of the workings of oral transmission.

It must be noted that the most common singing games which I encountered were the ones in the second section (with the exception of "Green Grass" and "Old King Glory," both of which I encountered only once). "Here We Go Zootie-O," "Here Comes Uncle Jessie," and "There Stands A Bluebird" were the most popular of the games. "Buzz" and "Ring Rose" appeared momentarily, were performed many times in a short span of time, and disappeared.

The performers all said that they both were "new games"; in other words had just been learned by them.

It is, perhaps, of some significance that the majority of the games which were most often performed involved a dance-step, and in "Ring Rose," "Buzz," "Puncinello," "There Stands a Bluebird," "Uncle Jessie," and, to some extent, "Here We Go Zootie-O," one or two performers are isolated from the rest of the group and forced to perform for the rest. (It is interesting to notice that Sutton-Smith encountered a similar phenomenon, and in relation to a game, "Puncinello," imported into the Camingerly area much as it was into New Zealand [see FL, 54:419].) Pushed to the background, then, are the "marriage" games which used to be prevalent among children's singing. The switch-over may indicate something of the preoccupations of these young Negro children, specifically in the area of the development of the area of selfhood or ego, for in an area of this sort where individual expression is otherwise extremely limited, this can serve as an important outlet.

#### Games of Anglo-American Origin

##### Loopy Loo

The two versions of this game collected in this neighborhood indicate something of a double tradition, the one (Looby Loo) furthered by schools and the other (Hokey Pokey) given life on the streets. Both, however, can be observed on the streets, sometimes mixed together to the accompaniment of great laughter from the participants. The Looby Loo version comes from greater antiquity than the other, and has received scholarly attention, especially concerning the meaning of the name. (See Gomme.)

The variations encountered in this game come mainly in the wording of the introductory verse, and in the last lines of the succeeding verses. The prevalent forms correspond in some phonetic relationship to:

Here we go looby loo,  
 Here we go looby light,  
 Here we go looby loo,  
 All on a Saturday night.

The successive verses describe the actions of placing some member of the body in and out of the circle and shaking it, and usually end with the line, "And turn myself about" (or "Hinkumbooby round-about").

Lady Gomme conjectured that the origin of this game may have come as an imitation of the "wild antic dancing in celebration of the rites of some deity in which animal postures were assumed." She goes on to attempt to fix the meaning of the title words with "louping" (leaping). The Scottish versions, with their grotesquely assumed positions do more to strengthen her position than any other single factor. The more intrepid Lewis Spence not only agrees with Lady Gomme but goes farther, claiming (without documentation) that "looby" means "lubberkin" or fairy the "Lubberfiend." "Perhaps it was a dance mimicking his actions, as the Pawnee Indians mimicked the Bear-spirit in their 'Bear-dance.'" Hofer cites an old Scotch version, "Here we come louping (leaping), referring to imitation of animals.

The Hokie-Pokie variant may simply be a variation caused by oral change, but I think a more plausible explanation is that some popular songwriter wrote the game on the Looby Loo theme when songs that described dances were popular, such as "The Varsity Drag" and "Balling the Jack" (i.e. the 1920's and 30's). The dance in this form was a standard intermission piece at high school dances during the 1940's. Sutton-Smith encountered it among students in New Zealand.

Bancroft, 280-2; Barnett, 4; Billson, 64; Botkin (APP), 29 (Okla.) (mentioned); Brown, I, 156 (N.C.) (three variants); Chambers, 137 (Scotland) (more grotesque positions than usual); Collins, 112; Crampton and Wollaston, 4-5; Creighton, 73 (Nova Scotia) (mentioned); Daiken, 33, 34, 155-6 (four variants, #3 begins "Hal-a-go-lee, go-lee/Hal-a-go-lee, go-lo," etc.); Davis (SRG), 32-3; Douglas, 41 (London); FL, 16:459 (Argyle-shire); FLJ, 5:326; Flanders and Brown, 192 (Vt.); Ford (CRGSS), 59-60, 86-87 (Scotland) (two variants, #2 from Chambers); Gardner (Handbook), 12; Gillington (Surrey), 22-3; Gomme, I, 352-61 (14 variants, five tunes from all parts of Great Britain, quoted from Halliwell, Gurdon, Chambers, FLJ, Addy (Glossary)). Three unusual texts, #12 (beginning "Christian was a soldier"), #13 (beginning "Friskee, friskee I was and I was/Drink-ing of small beer), and #14 (beginning "I love Antimacassar"); Gomme (CSG), II, 32-8; Graves, 26; Gurdon, 64; Flanders and Brown, 192 (Vt.); Florida, 313-15; HF, 8:27 (Ill.) (Lindy Lou); Halliwell, 75:226; Hofer (CSG), 32; Holbrook, 80; JAF, 24:312-13 (Mo.) (begins, "Old Mother Keturah and I/And two or three others more," etc.); 32:496 (Ill.); 33: 110-11 (Mich.); 40:25-6 (Ohio); 60:43 (Mo.); Johnson (EPG), 135; Kerr, 5; Kidson and Moffat (80 SG), 29, 56; Kidson and Moffat (100 SG), 56; Lair, 22; Linscott, 23-6 (Mass.); Long, 45-6; Manual, 89; Marsh, 34; Mason, 12; Mother Goose's N.T.R.J., 4; Myers and Bird, 222-3; Neilson

and Von Hagen (PEES), 86-7; Neilson and Von Hagen (MPEA), 93-4; Newell, 131 (Boston; Newton, 10-11; Northall, 361 (Sheffield) (from Addy [Glossary]); Randolph, III, 365-6 (Ozarks) (two variants); SFQ, 6:243-4 (Ill.); 8:215 (mentioned); Spence, 82 (discussion of origins); Sutton-Smith, 13 (N.Z.) (three variants, #1 begins, "Baloo, baloo, balight"); TFSB, 6, #1, 6-7 (Tenn.); Tanner, 75-6; Thornhill, 17; Walter, 20; Whiting and Bullock, 147 (Md.); Weir, 21.

I

A

### Loopie Loo



Here we go loopie loo,  
Here we go loopie la,  
Here go loopie loo,  
Around the corner we ride.

Put your left foot in,  
Put your left foot out,  
Give your foot a shake, shake, shake  
And shake it all about.

Put your right foot in, etc.  
Put your right hand it, etc.  
Put your left hand in, etc.  
Put your whole self in, etc.

B

The same as above, except that the first verse is:

Oh, lootie loo,  
Oh, lootie la,  
Oh, lootie loo,  
A Saturday night.

## II

## Hokie Pokie



Put your left foot in,  
 Put your left foot out,  
 Put your left foot in.  
 And shake it all about,  
 You do the hokie pokie  
 And you turn yourself about,  
 That's what it's all about.

(The additional members of  
 the body as above.)

In both versions the actions described accompany the song. The performers get in a circle and attempt to do the actions in such a way that they will attract notice from other children.

### Go In and Out the Window

This game has been encountered through the United States and Canada not only as a children's game, as here but also as a play-party. In its most common form it is a courtship game, starting with verses about marching around the "village" or "valley" or "levee" (in the southern United States). It then usually proceeds to verses about going in and

out the windows, standing a facing partner (or lover), following to London, kneeling or bowing before the lover, kissing or measuring love, and so on. Commonly, the verses end, "Just as you (we) did before" or "For we have gained the day."

As in many other games of this sort, the actions being done are described in the words being sung. Yet, this version from Philadelphia is unusual in that the courtship part of the game has been eliminated, and the actions described are of the "chore" type, usually associated with such games as "Here we go 'round the mulberry bush." Chase reports the game with similar verses to this.

As the common British version of the game begins with "Go round and round the village," Lady Gomme feels that there is some connection between the game and the custom of "beating the bounds" of a village. Newell, on the other hand, feels that "village" is a corruption of "valley." He also sees "levee" as a substitute for "valley," and would have the southern ending, "For we have gained the day," as a cry of final triumph of the suitor, though to this writer that line indicates possible influence from a local war song.

AA (o.s.), I:255-6; Berea Quarterly, Oct., 1910, 28; Balfour and Thomas, 116 (Northumberland); Bancroft, 290-2; Barnett, 24; Beckwith, 67 (Jamaica) (verses end "An' follow in de depths so sweet"; last verse, "An' now we are married," etc.); Brown, I, 119-122 (N.C.) (eight variants, #5, "We're marching around the love ring"; #6, "There is a lily in the valley/As we go marching by"; #8, "I am walking on the levee"); Brown, III, 108 (N.C.); Brown and Boyd, 29; Chase (AFTS), 191 (Va., N.C.) ("Go fasten down the shutters; Go jumping over the doorsills; Go wash your dirty windows; Go up and down the ladder, etc."); Collins, 15 (N.C.) (two variants); Crampton and Wollaston, 10; Daiken, 76, 153-4 (two variants, #2, Belfast, from O'Casey); Davis (ESV), 228 (Va.) (mentioned); Dearmer and Shaw, 81; Douglas, 41, 74 (London); Earle, 348 (mentioned); Florida, 300-1; Ford (TMA), 260-1; Fuson, 175 (Ky.); Gomme II, 122-43 (19 variants from all parts of Great Britain; #15 begins, "Marching round the ladies"; #16 begins, "Come gather again on the old village green/Come young and come old, who once children have been; #17 begins, "Three jolly sailor boys/Lately come ashore/Spend their time in drinking lager wine/As they have done before; #19 (from N & Q); Gutch and Peacock, 253 (Lincolnshire); HF, 8:26 (Ind.); Holbrook, 91 (from Gomme); Hofer (CSG), 16; Hornby, 39; Hudson (FSM), 287-8 (Miss.); Hudson (SMF), 119 (Miss.); Hudson and Herzog, 35 (Miss.); JAF, 8:253 (Ontario); 15:194-5 (Fla.); 24:306 (Mo.); 26:138 (E. Tenn.); 31:132 (Toronto); 33:120-1 (Mich.) (We're marching on the level"); 40:26 (Ohio); 44:12-13, 18-19 (Idaho) (two variants); 47:338 (Ga.); 49:243-4 (Ind.) (four variants); 54:165 (Mc.); Johnson (EPG), 136-7; Kemmerer, 90; Kerr, 31; Lair, 19; Linscott, 9 (Mass.) (final line, "'til the highland gates are closed"); Long, 49; McDowell, 60-1 (Tenn.); MacLagan, 65 (Argyleshire); Manual, 90; Marsh, 54; Myers and Bird, 263-4; NFP, #3, 11-12 (Nebr.); N & Q, 8th series, I:249; Neely, 204 (Ill.); Neilson and Von Hagen (PEES), 87; Neilson and Von Hagen (MPEA), 96; Newell, 128-9, 229-31 (N. Y., Fla.) (two

variants and a discussion of others; #1 has final line, "As we are all so gay;" and final verse, "Such love have I to show you"; Newton 39-40; O'Casey, 20 (Belfast); Owens, 304 (Tex.); PTFLS, I:27 (Tex.); "Palimpsest," 10:64-6 (Iowa) (three variants); Potter, 2: Pound, 73 (Nebr.) (mentioned); Puckett, 55 (mentioned); Randolph (OFS), III, 336-8 (four variants); Ross, 12-13; SFQ, 6:194-6 (W. Va.); 8:207 (mentioned); Shearin and Combs, 36, 38 (Ky.) (mentioned); Social Plays, 18, 24 (two variants); Sperling, 17; Sutton-Smith, 23 (N.Z.) (three variants); TFSB #12, 18 (Tenn.); Tanner, 81-3; Thornhill, 3; Udal, 345-6; Weir, 18; Wolford, 171, 281 (Ind.) (discussion of variants and history); Wood (AMG), 98-100; Wood and Goddard, 572.

### Go In and Out the Window



Go in and out the window,  
Go in and out the window,  
Go in and out the window,  
Just like you did before.

Go wash your dirty windows,  
(three times)  
Just like you did before.

Go wash your dirty doorsteps,  
(three times)  
Just like you did before.

Sweep your little floor,  
Just sweep your little floor,  
Just sweep your little floor  
Just like you did before.



Go in and out the window,  
 (three times)  
 Just like you did before.

All join in a circle. One person, chosen as "it" goes around the circle skipping in between each of the others, as in the "thread the needle" square dance step, on first verse. The same person then chooses the actions to be performed, and as he sings about them, he does appropriate actions, such as making washing motions in faces of those he passes in second verse, washing feet on third verse, etc.

### This is the Way

This is one of the oldest and most common singing games of young children. It is a simple game of imitation, usually starting with the verse about going around the mulberry bush (sometimes "wig bush" or "barberry bush"; Gomme [I, 407] and Holbrook hypothesize that at least this part of the game derives from the custom of dancing around a tree at wedding ceremonies), and ending with "So early in the morning," or "On a cold and frosty morning." In England, and Scotland, this game has been intermingled with elements of another called "Merry-ma-tansa." Gomme quotes (I, 371) a versions of that game with the usual action verses of "This is the Way," and Chambers prints a version of "This is the Way," with verses that end "Around the merry-ma-tanzie."

Another game, "Nettles," has also exerted its influence on this game. As it is given in Halliwell (p. 227), and later quoted in Gomme (I, p. 412), it is also an imitation game, but is one making fun of adults with such verses as "This is the way the lady goes," "This is the way the gentleman goes," and "This is the way the tailor goes." Gomme, Holbrook, and Ford have versions of "This is the way" which contain verses from "Nettles."

Because of the similarity of tunes, this game is also occasionally confused with the Christmas song, "Christmas Day in the Morning."

The most common versions of this game begin with the "mulberry bush" and proceed to describe the way in which certain household chores are performed, and the days with which they are associated. Thus, there are commonly verses on washing (Monday), ironing (Tuesday), scrubbing the floor (Wednesday), sweeping the floor, baking the bread, going to church, etc. Thus, the version collected on Iseninger Street differs considerably from the standard. Its variations are ones that were almost





This is the way I comb my hair,  
 Comb my hair, comb my hair.  
 This is the way I comb my hair,  
 Before I go to school.

This is the way I brush my teeth, etc.  
 This is the way I drink my milk, etc.  
 This is the way I wash my hands, etc.

Directions: Large circle, all make appropriate motions while singing.

### London Bridge

The common form of London Bridge can be divided into two sections, the building part and the capturing part. There is the usual introduction, announcing the theme, "London Bridge is falling (or broken) down/My fair lady" (or "Dance over my Lady Lea"); then, the various suggestions of building materials and the reasons why they won't work. Then there is the transition leading to the second part in which a watchman is set with a pipe in his mouth and a dog barking at his feet. The second part then commences with the capture of the victim or robber, his plea, the setting of his bail, and finally, marching off to prison.

Gomme, Bett, Spence, and Marvin all (I think rightly) point out the sacrificial origins of this piece. To do so is to view the capture of the prisoner as the choosing of the sacrificial victim. Though this may have been the original incentive, one feels that it is not a sufficient one today, for the game as we have it seems to be a mixture of the sacrificial theme and a more mild apprehension of a criminal. This is seen in its clearest aspect when we view the related game, "Hark the Robbers," which is sung to the same tune with the repeated "my fair lady" line, and which is strictly an apprehension game, without any vestige of sacrifice involved. Gomme seems to have felt that this game was simply a degeneration of "London Bridges," for a great many versions of that game contain the same verses as "Hark the Robbers." I think the opposite could obtain, however, for there is just as much evidence that "London Bridge" has simply borrowed verses from the other game, and thus expanded that part of the game in which the sacrificial victim was chosen. It is really not a question that can be fully resolved, but the possibility of the influences

working either way should not be ignored, even though evidence shows us that "London Bridge" is of the greater antiquity.

The manner in which the game is played is fairly standard, in both "London Bridge" and "Hark the Robbers." A couple hold up their hands together, thus forming an arch. The others in the game file through, and the two making an arch, at a prearranged signal, descend their arms and thus capture one of the players. The one captured then must choose which side he wants to be on (usually by choosing between two objects, not knowing which represents which side) for a tug-of-war, or he is "the prisoner" and serves as "it" for a game of tag.

The game as it was collected in Philadelphia, however, is neither of these. Rather, it is a game of "consequences," for the one caught in the arch must undergo the penalties of his back and neck pounded on, and then getting pushed violently out of the "prison." In this form, it is really closer to the "Hark the Robbers" form of the game, for it skirts the construction part and quickly gets to the capture and punishment part, but it is unlike either form in the actions involved, other than the arch-couple and the line going through.

Many games, using the tune and words, seem to have developed individually in local areas. I have included them below.

AA (o.s.), 1:262-4 (Wash.) (includes incidental verses, "Here comes the hatchet to cut off your head" and "Here comes the wheelbarrow to roll you over"); Balfour and Thomas, 113-4 (Northumberland); Bancroft, 278; Bett (GOC), 4: 99 (discussion of origins); Bett (NRT), 35-7 (discussion of origins); Betts, 49; Botkin (APP), 36:86, 129 (Okla.) (mentioned); Brown, I, 137 (N.C.) (four variants); Brown and Boyd, 12, 37; Burne, 519 (Shropshire) (ends, "Stamp your foot and let her go"; verses end, "Gay ladies, gay"); Cary, 43; Collins, 24-5 (N.C.) (two variants, #1 ends: "Iron and steel will mend this bridge"; extremely unusual "Lock low ladies, turn" version); Creighton, 73 (Nova Scotia) (mentioned); Daiken, 95-8 (two variants from Gomme); Davis (SRG), 12-13; Earle, 348 (mentioned); Farnsworth and Sharp, 83; Flanders and Brown, 45 (Vt.); Florida, 320-1; Ford (CRGSS), 69 (Scotland); Ford (TMA), 262-4; Forsythe, 30; Gardner (FSH), 233 (N.Y.) (different game); Gomme, I, 192-99, 333-50; II, 441-2 (plus 4 variants of "London Bridge," plus seven variants of "Hark the Robbers"); Gomme (CSG), II, 14-19; Gomme and Sharp, 3, set 1, 14; HF, 7:85, 311; 8:27 (Mich, Mass., Ill., Ind.); Halliwell, 38; Hofer (CSG), 13; JAF, 26:356 (Nebr.) (mentioned); 27:303 (Mo.); 31:146 (Ontario); 33:110 (Mich.); 34:38 (S.C.); 34:111-12 (N.C.) (second part, "Heist go, ladies turn," etc.; different game like many contra-dances); 38:243 (Bermuda); 40:38 (Ohio); 47:339 (Ga.) (mentioned); 47:388 (Ga.) (second and third lines: "Up to de white house we mus' go/Pity po' me"); 60:24-5 (Mo.); 60:40 (Mo.) ("half built up," "all built up," ends with "Down to the workhouse you must go," etc.); Johnson (EPG), 138-9; Kerr, 12; Kidson and Moffat (100 SG), 6, 44 (the latter a related version of "Hark the Robbers"); Kidson and Moffat (75 British), 13; Kingsland, 206; Linscott, 34-6 (Mass.) (ends with "Iron bars will last for aye"); Long, 45-6; Manual, 91 (ends "L.B. is falling down and it shall fall on you";

uses only one verse); MacLagan, 237-8 (Argyleshire); Marsh, 32; McAtee, 18 (Ind.); Marvin, 68-72 (discussion of origins); Mother Goose's R.T.J., 108; Myers and Bird, 223-5; NFP #3, 9-10; Newton, 25; Newell, 204-11, 253-4 (Boston, Savannah, Ireland, Md.) (six variants, discussion of origins, etc.; version #6 seems to be another game); Northall, 365-6; Opie (ODNR), 270-6 (discussion of origin, history, of early printings and foreign analogs); "Palimpsest," 10:58-60; Parsons (FSSI), 182 (S. C.) (different game); Potter, 4; PTFLS, I:20; Rackham, 115; Randolph (FSO), III, 388 (Ozarks) (ends, "Iron and stone will stand alone"); Rimbault, 34; SFQ, 6:231-3 (W.Va); 8215 (mentioned); Singing Games, 50, group 3; Smith, 20 (second and third verses; "half built up," all built up"); Social Plays, 22; Spence, 88 (discussion of origins); Sutton-Smith, 21-2 (n.Z.); Thornhill, 2 (final verse, "Tread on her toes and let her go"); Wolford, 221, 301 (discussion of history and variants); Wood (NSP), 38 (to a different game).

### London Bridge



London Bridges all broke down,  
All broke down, all broke down.  
London Bridges all broke down,  
My fair lady.

London Bridges half built up,  
etc.

London Bridges all built up,  
etc.

(recited) "You're prisoner."  
(much laughing)

Take the key and lock them up,  
etc.

Take the sticks and beat on their backs,  
etc.

Take the ax and chop off their head,  
etc.

Take the bucket of water and wash them away,  
etc.

Two form arch, others march through. On first verse, the arch is dropped temporarily in front of each person going through, as if to scare them. On the second verse, the arch is held level to the shoulders of the arch-men, making the others stoop as they go through. On the last three verses, actions appropriate to the words.

### Little Sally Waters

The manner in which this game has been played, and the nature of the song accompaniment has remained fairly constant in its collected history. Most versions begin with a reference to Sally Waters (Walker, Flinders, Ann) sitting in the saucer (sand, sun). Some rather make reference to Sally sprinkling in a pan. All agree that whatever she is doing, she is doing it for some young man, and then go on to have her point out who her favorite is. A ceremonial marriage is then performed in some way or another, often accompanied by the appropriate rhyme about wishing the couple joy and "first a girl and then a boy."

Lady Gomme has convincingly argued that this is not only one of the many games in imitation of the marriage ceremony but also that it contains vestiges of water-worship very important in the past to solemnization of the vows, and that the references to the productivity of the marriage derive from a time when the issue of the union was the thing that properly (indeed, legally) sealed it. (Daiken makes the curious and unverified assertion that this is a "funeral" game.)

It is interesting to note that the nursery rhyme, "Polly Flinders" (see Opie [ODNR], 354), perhaps because of a similarity of meters, and the fact that both Polly and Sally are sitting in something, has affected a number of variants of this game (see Bates for instance).

The first of the variants printed here comes from the oldest tradition, and, significantly, was collected from an elderly woman who told me about how she used to play it when she was a child as a criticism on how it is being played today. The changes made are perhaps due to the added rhymes given to the game by changing "saucer" to "sand" and "Waters" to "Ann." The "modern" version is also collected as a jump-rope rhyme (see page 112).

AA, I (o.s.), 248, 283-4 (D.C.); Addy (Glossary); Barnett, 20; Bett (GOC), 4, 9, 12-13, 15 (discussion of origins); Bates, 73 ("Here's Polly

Flinders/She sits on the cinders/Waits for a fairy to come and bring her news/Stand upon your feet dear/Take a look around here/Kiss the one you love best, the one you'd like to choose"); Beckwith, 78 (Jamaica) (with additional words); Bolton, 120 (N.Y.) (as counting-out rhyme); Botkin (APP), 30, 35, 62 (Okla.) (mentioned); Brown I, 130 (three variants, third begins, "Little Sally Flinders/Sitting in the cinders); Brown and Boyd, 42; Burne, 509 (Shropshire) (three variants, all containing unusual lines, third related to "On the Mountain Stands a Lady"); Creighton, 73 (Nova Scotia) (mentioned); Daiken, 111; Dearmer and Shaw, 80-1; Douglas, 89 (London); Earle, 348 (mentioned); Eckenstein, 62 ff. (discussion of origins and structure); FL, 25:358; FLJ, 7:207 (Dorsetshire); FLR, 5:84-9 (Surrey); Gomme II, 149-79, 453-4 (49+2 variants quoted from FLJ, Henderson, N & Q, FLR, Burne, Northall, Addy [Glossary], Midland Garner, Northamptonshire N & Q, Halliwell; many directly from informants all over Great Britain; discussion of origin and distribution); Gomme (CSG), II, 20-3; Gomme and Sharp, set 3, 18; Gutch and Peacock, 253; Halliwell, 229; Henderson, 26 (N. England) (two variants, #1 begins, "Sally Walker, Sally Walker/Come spring-time and love/She's lamenting, she's lamenting/All for her young man"); HF, 8:27 (Mich., Ill., Ind.); Hornby, 23; Hudson (FSM), 290-1 (Miss.); Hudson (SMF), 121-2 (Miss.); Hurston, 78 (mentioned); JAF, 8:254 (Ontario); 31:55 (Ontario); 31:147 (Ontario); 31:159-60 (Ottawa); 33:122-3 (Mich.) (two variants, #2 ends, "Wipe your eyes out with your frock/For that is what we sing/To the babies in the block); 47:388 (Ga.); 60:14 (Mo.) (two variants, #2 ends, "Wipe your eyes out with your frock/And tell us who the babies are/A-crying on the block); 60:39 (Mo.) (two lines in center, "Put your hand on your hip, Let your backbone slip"); Jeckyll, 190 (Jamaica); Kerr, 9 (two versions); Kidson and Moffat (100 SG), 15; Kidson and Moffat, 30; Kingsland, 208-9; Lippincott's Magazine, 38:324 (D.C.); Marvin, 64-7 (three variants); Midland Garner, N.S., ii, 31-2 (Oxford); N & Q, 5th Series, iii; 8th Series, i, 249 (Somersetshire); 9th Series, xii, 474; Newell, 70; Northamptonshire N & Q, ii, 104-5; Northall, 375-8 (12 variants; #2 related to "On the Mountain Stands a Lady"; #3, "Sally Walker, come spring-time and love; #12, "Silly old man, He walks alone, He wants a wife and can't get one"); Potter, 7; SFQ, I, #4, 48 (as counting-out rhyme); 6:253 (W.Va.); 8:214 (mentioned); Sutton-Smith, 15-16 (N.Z.) (two variants); Thornhill, 8; Trent-Jones, 24 (final lines, "Turn to the one with lan"/Turn to the one with the money/Kiss him and call him honey"); Udal, 339-42 (Dorsetshire); Weir, 22-3; Withers, 66 (as jump-rope rhyme, contains lines, "Put your hand on your hip/Let your backbone slip"); Wolford, 210-11 (Ind.).

## I

## Little Sally Waters

(chanted)

Cryin' and weepin' for what she have done

Rise Sally rise,

Wipe your weepin' eyes.

Turn to the east, turn to the west.

Turn to the one that you love best.

## II

Little Sally Ann  
 Sittin' in the sand  
 Weepin' and a'creepin'  
 For a nice young man.  
 Rise Sally rise,  
 Wipe your dirty eyes.  
 Turn to the east,  
 Turn to the west,  
 Turn to the very one that you love best.

"Sally" is in the center of the circle, sitting. She makes believe that she is crying, while all the others sing the above. Then, at the end, she chooses the one to take her place, kisses him (or her!), and he goes to the center. The game is then repeated.

A-Tisket, A-Tasket (Drop the Handkerchief)

This game can be played with or without the accompaniment of this song, and has been collected in both forms in Philadelphia. This has been true throughout the history of the game. Many other songs and rhymes have been at one time or another associated with this game; indeed, Gomme mentions so many that discussion of them all is out of the question. For the most part, the other types of rhymes have been collected in the British Isles; the present version is very close to what seems to be the standard in the United States, and may, indeed, have been an invention here, though one version printed in Gomme is very closely related. In the United States, the words are fairly consistent, although the person to whom the letter is sent may vary (lover, mother, etc.), as does the method by which it was lost (dropped, lost, stolen, stolen by dog, etc.). Lomax suggests that the reason for this uniformity may be due to the influence of a popular record of a version of this song in 1938 (Ella Fitzgerald, Decca, 1840-A [63693].)

Among the British versions, many mention the loss of a letter. Sometimes the thing lost is rather a glove mysteriously full of water, or a pigeon who has been hiding in a pocket. Often the one who "loses" the object, in both England and the United States, invokes the protection of a dog. Also, on both sides of the Atlantic, the person losing the object is occasionally the proverbial Lucy Locket. Maria Leach (Soup-stone, 87-8) mentions the fact that the handkerchief when dropped is a symbol of the availability of the woman.



As the game has been collected in both a singing and non-singing form, I have given below a bibliographical note for both. It must be understood that the two, as far as bibliography is concerned, are often interdependent, but it was felt that the two should be divided in some way.

#### A-Tisket, A-Tasket

AA, I (o.s.), 257 (Wash.) (three variants, #1, "I lost my handkerchief Saturday night/And found it Sunday morning"; #2 and #3 are Lucy Locket variants); Bancroft, 268-70; Balfour and Thomas, 113 (Northumberland); Barnett, 33; Beckwith, 29 (Jamaica) ("Drop Peter drop/Drop my gold ring/Send a letter to my love/I drop it on the way"); Bett (GOC), 29 (discussion of origin); Botkin (APP), 21, 30, 32 (Okla.) (mentioned); Botkin (TAF), 806; Brown and Boyd, 32; Burne, 512 (Shropshire); Champlin and Bostwick, 272-3; Daiken, 194; Earle, 347 (mentioned); FLJ, 5:52 (Cornwall); 7:213 (Dorsetshire); FLR, 5:87; Fauset, 127 (Nova Scotia); Ford (CRGSS), 60-1 (Scotland); Gardner, 233-4 (N.Y.); Gomme, I, 109-112 (eight rhymes, #5 is "Wiskit-a-Waskit/A green leather basket"); 305-310 (14 variants, seven mention the loss of the letter); Gomme, II, 418; Graham, 37-8; HF, 7:85 (Ill.); 8:24 (Ind., Ky., Ill., N.Y.); Halliwell, 76, 227 ("glove" rhyme); Hofer (CSG), 16; Hudson (SMF), 118 (Miss.); JAF, 31:57 (Ontario); 33:96-7 (Mich.); 40:33 (Ohio); 60:24, 40 (Mo.) (two variants, #2 has couplet after it, "A tisket, a tasket/Hitler's in his casket"); Johnson (FGSHI), 170 (S.C.); Kemmerer, 89, 90; Kerr, 32; Kidson and Moffat (100 SG), 22-3 (two variants); Kidson and Moffat, 49; LaSalle, 71 (as jump-rope rhyme); Linscott, 37-8 (Mass.), discusses influence of 1938 popular record; MacLagan, 213-14 (Argyleshire); Manual, 67-8; Marsh, 16; Myers and Bird, 260-2; NFP #3, 5-6 (Nebr.); Newell, 168-9 (Phila. and N.Y.) (two variants, #1, "water in glove"; discusses foreign analogues); Northall, 364-5 (from FLJ, 5:53); Owens, 7 (Tex.); "Palimpsest," 10:37-8 (Iowa) (two variants); Potter, 3; Pound, 74 (mentioned); Ross, 2-3; SEQ, 8:211 (mentioned); Smith, 27; Weir, 13; Wolford, 216-18, 299 (Ind.) (discussion of history).

#### Drop the Handkerchief

(with great variety of rhymes)

Acker, 23; Bates, 74; Beckwith, 30; Jamaica); Bett (GOC), 16; Burne, 512 (Shropshire); Boyd, 9; Brewster (ANG), 91-3 (N.C.) (discussion of origins and foreign analogs); Brown, 181 (N.C.); FLJ, 5:213; FLR, 5:87; Gardner (Handbook), 14; Gomme, I, 306; II, 407-8; Gutch and Peacock, 250 (Lincolnshire) (mentioned); Halliwell, 214; Jeckyll, 197 (Jamaica); Johnson (EPG), 101; Kingsland, 177-8; LaSalle, 34; MacLagan, 214 (Argyleshire); Myers and Bird, 220; Mason and Mitchell, 235; NFP, #7, 4-5 (Nebr.); Newton, 8, 9; Northall, 364-5 (from Burne, Halliwell); Whitney and Bullock, 14 (Md.).

## A-Tisket, A-Tasket



A-tisket, a-tasket,  
 My green and yellow basket.  
 I sent a letter to my mother  
 And on the way I dropped it.

One person in circle given handkerchief. He circles around others on outside of ring. He drops handkerchief behind someone, and that person must either pick up handkerchief and tag him before he gets to his place once again or he is "it" for the next game.

Skip to My Lou

This game has been collected throughout the United States, in most cases as a "play-party game," played by youths and young adults rather than children. The simplicity of its actions, however, have made it something of a favorite in manuals for approved children's play, and this, I think, has accounted for its acceptance among the younger set. There has been little scholarly discussion of the piece, except for the derivation of the name.

There are a great number of traditional verses which are found in the many collected versions of this game, all of them describing exactly or, more commonly, metaphorically, the actions to be performed. Of the latter, the "flies in the buttermilk" verse is easily the most popular. The wording of the final line of the verses is found in a variety of forms close to the standard, such as "shu-li-lu" and "shoe-shoe-ma-lou."

Botkin (APP), 259, 315-16 (Okla.) (two variants); Brown I, 101-3 (N.C.) (eight variants); Cambiaire, 132 (Tenn.); Chase (AFTS), 193-5 (two variants, #2 from Va.); Collins, 27 (N.C.); Davis (FSV), 216 (Va.) (mentioned); Ford (TMA), 240-1; Florida, 338-9; Folkways, 7029 (as jump-rope rhyme; Fuson, 166-9 (Ky.); Hofer (PFGD), 12; Hudson (FSM), 300 (Miss.); Hudson (SFM), 128-9 (Miss.); Hudson and Herzog, 38; JAF, 24:304-5 (Md.); 25:270 (Nebr. and Ia.); 26:136-7 (four variants) (E. Tenn., Miss., Ind.); 28:276-7 (Nebr.); 32:493 (Ill.); 33:123-5 (Mich.) (seven variants); 40:97, 98 (Ky.); 42:203-5 (Ozarks) (see also Randolph [TO]); 44:20-1 (Idaho); 49:245 (Ind.) (three variants); 54:164 (Md.); Kemmerer, 99; "Letters," #3, 30-38 (Ky.); Lomax (ABFS), 294-5; Lomax (BLAFS), 98; McAtee, 18 (Ind.); McDowell, 58-9 (Tenn.); McIntosh (S & S), 29 (Ill.); McIntosh (SISG & S), 9 (Ill.); Neely, 201-2 (Ill.); Owens, 86-8 (Tex.); PTFLS, 1:15 (Tex.); 8:309 (Tex.); 8:331 (Tex.); "Palimpsest," 10:40-2 (Ia.); Pound, 73 (mentioned); Randolph (OFS), III, 287 (Ozarks) (seven variants); Randolph (TO), 141-5 (Ozarks); Richardson, 82 (Southern Mts.); SFQ, 6:233-8 (W. Va.); Seeger, 166; 8:224 (mentioned); Shearin and Combs, 36 (mentioned); TFSB, 10:1, 11 (Tenn.) (two variants); 11:13 (Tenn.); 12:20 (Tenn.); Wolford, 198-200, 292-3 (Ind.) (discussion of origin and provenance).

### Skip to My Lou



Choose your partner, skip to my lou,  
 Choose your partner, skip to my lou,  
 Choose your partner, skip to my lou,  
 Skip to my lou, my darling.

Lost my partner, what'll I do  
 (three times)  
 Skip to my lou, my darling.

I found another, better (or prettier) than you,  
 (three times)  
 Skip to my lou, my darling.

Skip, skip, skip to my lou,  
 (three times)  
 Skip to my lou, my darling.

Flies in the buttermilk, shoo, shoo, shoo,  
 (or)  
 Flies in the sugar bowl, shoo, fly, shoo,  
 (three times)  
 Skip to my lou, my darling.

Skip, skip, skip to my lou,  
 (three times)  
 Skip to my lou, my darling.

### Ring Around the Rosy

This is probably the most common of little children's dancing-singing games. It is also one of the shortest and thus has undergone very little mutation. The earliest collected versions from England indicate that the primary movement of the game, the falling down at the end of the song, was originally accompanied by some sort of sneeze sound. Lady Gomme feels that this connects the game with the many superstitious beliefs connecting the sneeze and the supernatural. Bett connects the sneezing with the "notion in the primitive mind that laughing, yawning, sneezing, and so on, have a close connection with the human spirit." Spence carries this idea much farther. He says, "The sneeze in folklore is ominous, and universally so, as a sign of demoniac possession....The idea seems to be that the sneeze will cast the demon out. Perhaps the game is the memory of a ritual act by which evil spirits were exorcised not only by some act associated with the beneficent power of the genius of the rose but by the expulsive effort of sneezing." For the most part, the imitation of the sneeze was lost in the trip across the Atlantic.

The most common form of the game in England is much longer than in the United States. It runs:

Ring, a ring of roses,  
 A pocketful of posies;  
 One for me, and one for you,  
 And one for little Moses  
 etc.

while the United States variants usually limit themselves to the first two lines and some cue (all fall down; all squat! etc.) to fall to the ground or to stoop.

For a similar game, "The Gallant Ship," see Bancroft, 170; Marsh, 2; Kerr, 27; Games and Play, 17; Gomme, I, 375; and Kidson and Moffat (100 SG), 10, where it serves as a beginning for "Merry-Ma-Tansa."

AA (o.s.), 253 (Wash.); Addy (Glossary), 191 (Sheffield); Bett (GOC), 89, 98 (discussion of origin); Bolton, 115 (as counting-out rhyme); Botkin (APP), 28 (Okla.) (mentioned); Brown, I, 158 (N.C.) (five variants); Burne, 511, 571 (Shropshire) (two variants); Daiken, 77, 113, 134, 150 (discussion of origins, one Gaelic analogue); Douglas, 59 (London); Earle, 348 (mentioned); Ford (TMA), 254-5; Gardner, 232 (Mich.); Gomme, II, 108 (11 variants, two from Burne; #3 ends, "A curchey in, and a curchey out/And a curchey all together"; #4 has lines, "Up-stairs and down-stairs/In my lady's chamber-"; #9 and #10 are unusual texts; Gullen, 126 (ends, "One for little Moses"); Gutch and Peacock, 252 (Lincolnshire); HF, 7:91 (Ill.); JAF, 26:139 (Tenn.); 31:57 (Ontario) (two variants); 33:119-20 (Mich.); 34:38, (S.C.); 40:25 (Ohio); 60:32 (Mo.); Johnson (EPG), 85 (mentioned); Kidson and Moffat (100 SG), 22-3 (two variants); Linscott, 50 (Mass.) ("hopscotch, all fall down"); Marsh, 40 (with curtsey and "atishu" verses); Newell, 127-8 (five variants, #1 (Mass.), "All the firls in our town ring for little Josie"; #5, "A ring a ring a ransy/Buttermilk and tansy/Flower here and flower there/and all squat"); Northall, 360 (three variants, #2 from Burne, #3 from Addy [Glossary]); SFQ, 6:205-6 (W.Va.); 19:102 (Tenn.); Social Plays, 16 (to a different game); Spence, 89 (discussion of origins); Sutton-Smith, 12 (N.Z.) (two variants); Whitney and Bullock, 144 (Md.) ("All the children in our town/Sing for Uncle Josy").

### Ring Around the Rosy



Ring 'round the rosy.  
 Pocket full of posy.  
 Last one down is a nigger baby (or pigeon).

Circle of small children. They turn as they sing and squat or fall to the floor on the last line.

## Puncinello

In the tempo of this game, there is the feeling of Anglo-Saxon rather than Negro origin. This is borne out to some extent in that it is reported by Sutton-Smith in New Zealand (p. 30). The only other reference in print that I have been able to locate is Hofer (CSG), page 29, though I think that it is a fairly common playground game. Sutton-Smith seems to have felt that the game was introduced by playground instructors, and the same may be true in this case (see FL, 54:419).

### Puncinello



How do you do,  
Puncinello, little fellow?  
How do you do,  
Puncinello, little dear?

What can you do,  
Puncinello, little fellow?  
What can you do,  
Puncinello, little dear?

We'll do it too,  
Puncinello, little fellow!  
We'll do it too,  
Puncinello, little dear!

Who do you chose,  
Puncinello, little fellow?  
Who do you chose,  
Puncinello, little dear?

The children form a circle. One is chosen to be "Puncinello," and she stands in the center of the circle. On the second verse, she makes some action or grotesque motion. On the third verse this is imitated by all of the others. On the fourth, the one in the center choses who will take her place, and the game begins again.

### Walking in the Green Grass

Though hardly recognizable in its present form, this game is a version of a very old game, known in Gomme as "Green Grass" and related by her, and Spence later, to games played in imitation of funeral ceremonies. In most of its collected forms, it is, as here, clearly a "marriage" type game.

Gomme prints one text that is directly related to the present one, (I, #12, p. 160). The method of play which she sets forth is also very close to this Philadelphia version. The words, however, are far removed from any published text, though they derive their pattern from other games such as "London Bridges" where verses are in pairs with the second in some way countering the action of the first.

Addy (Glossary) (Sheffield); Brown I, 98 (N.C.); Burne, 511 (Shropshire); Chambers, 137-8 (Scotland); Gillington (Surrey), 18-19; Gomme, I, 153-69 (14 variants, from Halliwell, Burne, Henderson, Chambers, Addy [Glossary]); (discussion of origins and variants); HF, 8:24 (relates game to "The Three Dukes"); Halliwell 70; Henderson, 27 (N. England); JAF, 40:29 (Ohio); Kidson and Moffat (100 SG), 7, 95; Moffat (50 Scottish), 10; Newell, 50 (Phila.) (quotes Chambers).

#### Walking in the Green Grass



Walking in the green grass,  
Green grass, green grass.  
Walking in the green grass,  
So early in the morning.

What are you coming here for,  
etc.

Coming to get married,  
etc.

Who you gonna marry?  
etc.

I'm gonna marry Susie,  
etc.

How you gonna get her?  
etc

Coming through the doo-or,  
etc.

The door will be lo-ocked,  
etc.

Coming in the window,  
etc.

Window will be closed,  
etc.

I'm coming through the cellar,  
etc.

The cellar will be lo-ocked,  
etc.

I'm coming through the chimbley,  
etc.

The chimbley will be smoky,  
etc.

I'm gonna burn the house down,  
etc.

Where you gonna get the matches?  
etc.

Gonna get them from the store,  
etc.

The store will be closed,  
etc.

Now may I have her?  
etc.

Yes, you may have her,  
etc.

Spoken:

Now will you come?

No.

Sour pickles. (indefinitely)

Yes.

Sweet pickles.



The children form two lines facing each other. On the first stanza one line walks to the other, and the other side does the same thing on the second verse. Thereafter they alternate. On the fourth verse, the first line decides who is "getting married," and they walk to the other line singing her name. The one who is picked then just stands still for the rest of the game in the center between the two lines. It is she who makes the responses at the end. At the end, they form a circle and skip around the one who was chosen. Then the one chosen goes to the other side and the game starts over again.

### Green Grass

This, too, may be a distant relative of the "Green Grass" found in Gomme, etc., though the resemblance in text and manner of play is less close than the last.

#### Green Grass



Green grass, green grass,  
 Growing up so high,  
 For you are the one that I love best  
 And Eric come up to me.

(spoken by Eric) No!

You naughty boy, you sassy boy,  
 You ought to be ashamed.  
 For you are the one that I love best  
 And Eric come up again.

(Eric now has the option of saying yes or no, depending upon whether he wants to prolong the game.)

The children line up along a wall. One person walks up and down in front of them, singing the song. When the person in the crowd who has been chosen in the first verse finally submits, the two of them sing the first verse over, choosing someone else, and the process repeats itself until the last person is chosen. That person is then the first for the next game.

### Games of Negro Origin

#### There Stands a Bluebird

This game is almost certainly of Negro origin. Though it has been rarely reported, all versions of it (with one possible exception) have come from Negro sources. Zora Neale Hurston prints a text (pp. 39, 119) that is very close to the present one. Parsons (FLSSI) prints a tune and one verse from the Sea Islands that is certainly a close relative of this game. The Brown Collection has a game called "Go Round the Mountain" which does not indicate whether it was collected from Negro informants, which is the same as Hurston's game except the first verse is "Go round the mountain, two by two/Rise up, sugar, rise," and which calls for two in the center of the circle rather than one (I, 131). There are also related texts in JAF, 39:119 and 40:24. David DeCamp of the University of Texas, who has done much field work in Jamaica, has indicated that this is a common game there.

The color of the "bird" in the center is determined by the color of the dress or shirt she (or he) is wearing. This method of naming can be found in the related game, sometimes known as "Bluebird, Yellowbird" (see Ford (CGRSS), 78; JAF, 40:43, 60:24; Johnson (FCSHI), 167; Lomax (OSC), 74; Marsh, 110; Wolford, 92, among others).

The term "motion" referring to dancing or similar actions may come from the minstrel stage.

Many Negro songs have the expression "sugar and tea" in them (see JAF, 27:253, "Mr. Cooler he lub sugar an' tea").

(To the tune, "Skip to My Lou")

## There Stands a Bluebird



There stands a bluebird, tra la la la,  
 There stands a bluebird, tra la la la,  
 There stands a bluebird, tra la la la,  
 Who like coffee and tea? Me!  
 (Last line almost spoken)

Let me see your motion, tra la la la,  
 etc.

Oh, we can do your motion, tra la la la,  
 etc.

Choose your partner, tra la la la,  
 etc.

Played like "Puncinello," except the "motions" are less grotesque and more like dances.

Buzz

This game made its appearance in the neighborhood in April of 1960. For a few weeks it was the most popular game, and then it disappeared as suddenly as it had appeared. It is of the same general type as "Puncinello" and "There Stands a Bluebird," that is, a game in which someone performs for the others in the center of a circle.

## Buzz



Josie's got the buzz and she got it good,  
 She got it all over the neighborhood.  
 She go in, out, all about.  
 She go in, out, all about.  
 Turn to the one you love best.

Josie's in center of circle. On first verse she does a little dance. Then she chooses someone at end of verse and on second singing of verse they do a dance together. On third singing, Josie becomes part of the circle, and the person she chose then dances while the verse is being sung with his name.

### Miss Sally's in the Circle

This is a strange hybrid of a game. The first verse is the vestige of the game called "Froggy in the Middle." The usual manner of playing was for the children to form a ring and for the "froggy" to sit in the middle while the others hid their eyes and said a rhyme that in many versions was, "Froggy's in the middle and he can't get out." While their eyes were hidden, the froggy would escape and hide, and the others would then go searching for him. In one version in Gomme, however, the following instructions are given that are like those of the first verse in the present version: "The child in the centre tries to break out of the ring, those forming it keeping the Frog in the ring by any means in their power, while still keeping their hands clasped." (See also "Bull

Park," Gomme, I, 50). The remaining two verses in their game situation are related closely to "Puncinello," "Buzz," etc.

Botkin (APP), 28 (mentioned); Brown, I, 144 (N.C.); FLJ, 5:50; JAF, 26:140; 27:253 (S.C.); 60:32; Scarborough, 130 (Va.); Shearin and Combs, 38 (Ky.) (mentioned).

### Miss Sally's in the Circle



Miss Sally's in the circle and she can't get out.  
 Miss Sally's in the circle and she can't get out.  
 Miss Sally's in the circle and she can't get out.  
 I love Miss Sally Ann.

She got the wiggles when she walks, when she walks.  
 (three times)  
 I love Miss Sally Ann.

Around and around and around she goes.  
 (three times)  
 I love Miss Sally Ann.

The children form a circle, hands joined tightly. "Sally Ann" in center tries to break through on the first verse. She does a "wobble" step on second verse. She turns around during the third verse and whoever is in front of her at the end is the new "Sally Ann."

Old King Glory

Old King Glory of the tower.  
 The tower was so high  
 It nearly touched the sky.  
 The first one, the second one,  
 The third follow me.

The children form a circle. "Old King Glory" skips around the outside of the circle while all sing the first three lines. The "king" sings the last two alone, tapping someone on each number, but only the one tapped on number three comes out. He follows the "king," skipping around the ring and the process is started again. Game is over when everyone is picked and skipping around the ring.

Ring Rose

(To the tune, "Skip to My Lou")





Ring rose, the one I choose,  
 Ring rose, the one I choose,  
 Ring rose, the one I choose,  
 It's the latest (or lady) from Baltimore.

She can rock, that lady, but she can't rock me.  
 She can rock, that lady, but she can't rock me.  
 She can rock, that lady, but she can't rock me.  
 It's the latest (or lady) from Baltimore.

The children form a circle, with one person inside. She hits the hands which are held toward her by the others, while they sing the first verse. She picks someone, and they do a dance in center during the singing of the second verse. Then the original person goes back into the ring, and the one she has chosen takes her place.

### Here We Go Zootie-O

See Trent-Johns, 14-17 (Willowbee, two variants).



The children pair off, and form line in pairs. They cross hands and do a little dance step together, alternating pulling of arms to the

rhythm of the song. On the second verse they step back from each other, thus forming an "alley," all the while clapping to the song. On the third verse, the couple who are at one end dance down the alley, while the others continue clapping. When they get to the other end, they get back into the line and the game begins over.

### Uncle Jessie

See also jump-rope rhyme, page 104.

#### Here Comes Uncle Jessie



#### I

Here comes Uncle Jessie  
 Moving down the line,  
 With his horse and buggy  
 And buggy on his line.  
 Now if you want a fellow,  
 I tell you want to do.  
 Just get some salt and pepper  
 And do the jump with me.  
 All gone girl, shake that stuff (or sugar)  
 All gone girl, shake that stuff.  
 Shake it to the East,  
 Shake it to the West,  
 Shake it to the very one you like (or love) best.



Here comes Uncle Jessie  
 Walking down the street,  
 With his horse and buggy  
 And buckles on his feet.  
 Now if you want a fellow,  
 I'll tell you want to do.  
 Just get some salt and pepper  
 And put it on your shoe.  
 All gone girl, shake that stuff,  
 All gone girl, shake that stuff,  
 All gone girl, shake that stuff.  
 Turn to the east  
 Turn to the west,  
 Turn to the very one that you love best.

The children form a straight line or circle. "Uncle Jessie" gets into center of circle or in front of straight line and makes riding motions. On "salt and pepper" she hits shoes. On "all gone girl" she does a little two-step. On "shake it," etc. everyone turns around, and "Uncle Jessie" points to someone who then takes her place and starts the game all over again.

### Girls Games

#### Games with Simultaneous Participation of All

##### Old Mommy Witch

This is a common type of game in which one member of the group is elected a leader, and she serves to answer a number of questions posed to her by the others. Her answers determine the actions of the game. Such games as "Chickima-Grany-Crow" and "Mother, the Pot Boils Over" fit into this same category.

For descriptions of games similar to the one here presented, see Bancroft, 134; Bates, 84; Douglas, 58 (London); FLJ, 5:55 (Cornwall), 7: 219-22 (two variants, Dorset); Fauset, 131 (Nova Scotia, rhyme only); Gillington (Dorset), 10 (two variants, second has affinities with "Who Stole the Cardinal's Hat?"); Gomme, 390-6 (nine variants, London, Nor-

folk, Dorset, Yorkshire, Cornwall, Sussex); Holbrook, 111; JAF, 40:34-5 (Ohio); Newell, 172; Smith, 30; Sutton-Smith, 37.

The dialogue varies considerably from game to game. One typical one is as follows:

All: Oh, Mommy Witch, can we go out to play?  
We won't go near the river to chase the ducks away.

M.W.: Judy, go outside to see if it's raining.

Judy: (going away from group) Yes.

M.W.: Then you can't go. (they cry)

Judy: Yes.

M.W.: Well, you may go out to play.  
But don't go near the river to chase the ducks away.

All: Shoo, shoo, shoo (as if chasing ducks)

M.W.: Children!

All: What?

M.W.: I'll throw my broom after you.

All: We don't care.

M.W.: I'll throw my stick after you.

All: We don't care.

M.W.: I'll throw my dog after you.

All: We don't care.

M.W.: I'll throw myself at you. (She chases them.)

They all run for the step which is "home." Mommy Witch tries to beat everyone with her stick before they reach "home." Then, when everybody reaches the steps, she says to one person:

M.W.: Where have you been?

Other: I been to Grandmom's house.

M.W.: What did you do there?

Other: Did the dishes, scrubbed the floor, made the bed.

M.W.: How much did you get?

Other: Five dollars.

M.W.: Where's my share?

Other: Up on the roof.

M.W.: How shall I get it?

Other: If I fall will you laugh or cry?

If the other answers "cry," the game is over. If she answers "laugh," then Mommy Witch beats her with her stick until she can get back to the steps.

The children have another game that they call "Old Mommy Witch," also, but which is somewhat different. It may be descended from "Chickamy-Crany-Crow" (See Newell, 155). Once again the children all pick a "Mommy Witch." Then they all shout at her:

Old Mommy Witch  
Sat in a ditch  
Picked up a penny  
And thought she was rich.

which is a common taunt rhyme (See Hyatt, 650 [Ill.]; JAF, 40:41, as a jump-rope rhyme; LaSalle, 36; Smith 30; WF, 13:194). Then they begin to run away. They shout:

Are you ready?  
Three minutes.  
Are you ready?  
Two minutes.

And so forth, until she is tired of saying this, and then she runs and chases them home, beating with her "stick" (her hand).

#### Devil and the Egg

This is a descendant of the game, "Colors," in which the Angel and the Devil attempt to win over the most number of souls from the flock of the mother. The idea of the contest with the Angel is lost, the Devil only remaining. The idea of the struggle between good and bad, symbolized by a tug-of-war is also lost. But the game still has enough in it

to reveal its ancestry, for the "mother" in the old game divides here children into colors which the Angel or Devil must guess, and that is retained here.

For a description of "Colors," see: AA (o.s.), 279-80 (D.C.); Brewster, 181-3 (Ind.) (discussion of foreign analogues); Gomme, I, 8 (Kent), 132 (Strathspey); Newell, 213 (three variants, N.Y., Ga., Phila.), 257 (D.C.).

One player is chosen as "hen" or "mother." She gives each of the other players a color. One other player is chosen for the "Devil." All the players sit on the steps, but the "Devil" and the "Hen."

Devil: Knock, knock.

Hen: Who's there?

Devil: The Devil.

Hen: What do you want?

Devil: An egg.

Hen: What color?

Devil: Red (If there is no "red" egg, all say "Go wash your face and hands in red paint," and he chooses another color.)

Then the red egg must run to a place already specified and back before she is caught by the "Devil." If she is caught, she must go to the "garbage can"; if she isn't, she goes to the "sugar can," which are just places on one side or the other of the steps. Either the first or last who is caught becomes "it" for a game of tag, or to start another round of this game.

#### Dumb School

All sit on the steps. One is appointed as "teacher." The teacher comes to the steps with something in her fist. Students have to guess

which hand the object is in. If one 'pupil' guesses correctly, she is permitted to move up one step. As soon as one 'pupil' has moved up and down the steps she becomes the new 'teacher.' The 'teacher' only offers her hand to one 'student' at a time, but in no special order.

### Half Past or The Clock Game

Everyone sits on the steps. Two people chosen, they go out and decide on a number. They come back and ask "half-past?" Each one of the others says the number that comes to mind ("half-past one," etc.). When a person guesses the number the two who had decided on the number ask one of the following rhymes:

Boys and girls,  
Fruits and flowers,  
Ice cream, cake, or candy?  
Movie stars are dandy.  
Hot dogs, soda water,  
Root beer, dandy.  
Boys that walk the street.

or

Boys and girls,  
Fruits and flowers,  
Ice cream, cake, and candy  
All the animals in the zoo,  
Including Orphan Annie.  
Movie stars and cowboys,  
Or anything dandy.

or

Boys and girls  
Salute the flag.  
Ice cream, cake, and candy.  
Movie stars and cowboys  
And everything is dandy,  
Except Amos and Andy.

The person who has guessed the number is able to pick any of the categories mentioned in the rhymes. When he does, the two original ones go off and each pick one member of the category chosen. They come back and offer the winner the alternative. If 'fruits' has been picked, for instance, the two might come back and offer "apples and pears." If the winner choses "pears," then the one of the original two who had chosen "apples" takes the place of the winner, and she goes off with one who had chosen "pears" to chose a new number and to start the game over again.

#### Dog and Bone

This is a version of the game often called "Diamond Ring," or "Hide the Button." It is internationally collected (see Brewster's notes). It is often played in a ring, though I have not noticed that form here. It is used at dances as an "elimination" dance.

For similar games to that presented here, see: AA (o.s.), I:272 (D.C.); Brewster, 9-11 (Ind.) (discussion of foreign analogues); Brown, I, 64 (N.C.); Gomme, I, 96 (from Halliwell, Newell), 122: II, 36, 294, 408; HF, 7:92 (Ill.); 8:20 (Ind.); Halliwell, 223; Hyatt, 177 (Ill.); Johnson (EPG), 122; Justus, 64-5; MacLagan, 118 (Argylshire); NFP, #7, 3 (Neb.); Newell, 150 (two variants, Ga., Mass.), 151 (Ohio); Sutton-Smith, 106 (N.Z.).

One person is chosen as "dog," and an object is chosen as "bone." The "dog" goes away temporarily and then comes back and tries to choose who has the "bone." The object is passed around from one member of the group to another. Everyone tries to confuse the "dog" by making suspicious movements, by yelling "here" or "doggy, doggy, somebody's got your bone." When she (or he, for boys often play this game with the girls) finds the person who has the "bone," that person becomes the "dog."

## Hot and Cold Butter Beans

This is the game "Hide the Thimble" under another guise. The only difference between this and "Hide the Thimble" is that in that game the thimble is usually hidden, but in sight, whereas here the object chosen is almost always out of sight. The method of informing the searcher differs highly from place to place, but one common way is by humming louder or softer in relation to the searcher's proximity to the object.

For various reportings of games of this sort, see: AA (o.s.), 278 (D.C.) (rhyme to call players out—"Hot bread and butter/Please come to supper"): Brewster, 46-7 (Ind.) ("I Spy," discussion of foreign analogues); Brown, I, 38 (N.C.); Gomme, I, 212-13 (Keith, Hampshire, Berkshire, Cork, Sheffield, and a number of other reportings); Lippincott's Magazine, 38:333 (D.C.); MacLagan, 91 (Argylshire); Manual, 62; Myers and Bird, 220; Newell, 152; Newton, 7; Strutt, 381; Sutton-Smith, 105.

One person is chosen to hide an object. Others come out and the person who has hidden the object says, "Hot and cold butter beans." Then all the others look for the object, asking as they do, "Am I hot?" The replies to this are often novel. If a person is close, the reply may be (by degree) "you're warm," "you're hot," "you're sizzling," "you're percolating," "you're on fire." If the person is not close, the replies are (among others) "you're cold," "you're freezing," "you're in the icebox," and so forth. When the object is found, everyone runs to a prearranged base, which is some distance from the area. The one who has found it is permitted to beat anyone whom he can catch before they reach the base. Then, when everyone has reached the base, the one who has found the object hides it again and the game begins anew.

## Giant Steps

This game seems to be widely found throughout the United States, but has not been encountered in Great Britain. Brewster points to a

Jugoslavian analogue, but the relationship is a distant one. Some other printings of the game are found in: Brewster, 164 (Ga.); Boyd, 14; KFR, II, #4, p. 126 (Ky.); HF, 7:88 (Ill.); 8:19 (N.Y., Ind.); Mason and Mitchell (Active Games), 249.

One player is picked as leader. Others line up at starting line. The object of the game is to reach the finish line first. The leader yells out one of the players' names and allows that player to take a certain number of set movements forward. The number and type of movement is determined by the leader. The types of steps are "baby steps," (regular step), "giant step" (a running leap), "umbrella step" (a jump), and a "cartwheel." Before the person chosen can take the steps the leader has allowed he must first ask "May I?" The leader can at that time rescind her orders completely, or change them, but she usually doesn't. If the player does not ask the leader if she may, her turn is rescinded. First person to the finish line is leader in the next game.

### Red Light

This game, as the last, has not been encountered in Great Britain, though the foreign analogues mentioned by Brewster show it to be one of true international provenance.

Acker, 104; Brewster, 35-6 (Miss.); HF, 7:88 (Ill.); 8:19 (Ind., N.Y.); JAF, 58:153 (Ontario); LaSalle, 53-4, 56; Manual, 64, 72; Myers and Bird, 275; Smith, 210.

One person chosen as leader. The others line up. The object of the game is to reach the finish line first. The leader begins them as in a foot race, and then at some point soon, calls "One, two, three, Red Light." At that point everyone has to stop and freeze in whatever position they happen to be in. If any player is seen moving by the



leader, she is sent back. The players are strated again when the leader shouts, "Go." When one player crosses the finish line, she becomes leader.

## Boys Games

### Games of Individual Contest

#### Marbles

Marbles, as with many other such games which use game implements, has become standardized because the objects used in play are being manufactured, mass-produced. Originally, marbles, and its numerous other progenitors, was played with anything that could be fashioned round and durable. Marble itself was used, but being expensive was not the most common material. Baked clay, pebbles, any of a number of such materials were used to make the implements for playing. Today, of course, the round glass object has become standard.

For a description of the varieties of ways in which marbles and its close relatives have been played, see: Brewster, 144-48 (Ill., Ark.); Botkin (TNEF), 757; Cary, 26; Daiken, 177-80; Gomme, I, 44, 45, 51, 54, 58, 66, 67, 70, 218, 324, 350, 364, 413 (played with clay, cherry pits, pebbles, buttons, etc.); Holbrook, 29; JAF, 4:234 (N.Y.) ("Roley Poley"); LaSalle, 61-2; Lovett, 42; MacLagan, 152-6 (Argyleshire); Newell, 185-6; Smith, 221 ff.; Strutt, 384; Sutton-Smith, 127 ff. (N.Z.).

There are a number of marble games played in the neighborhood. As is commonly found, there are different names for different kinds of marbles. One of the favorite kinds is called a "flint" and is black and of a velvety appearance. A favorite marble is called a "loomer" (i.e. the one you like to shoot with). One with yellow streaks is called a "cat-eye"; a large one is called a "jumbo," a little one a "pea shooter." Others are "red cap," "blue light," and "green thunder," all based upon their colors.

The most common game is played in a circle, drawn on the ground. A specified number of marbles is agreed upon and placed in a group in the center of the ring. The players must shoot from the edge of the circle. A coin is often flipped to see who shoots first. The first shot must be made from the knee, all the others from any position desired. First one shoots until a miss is made; a miss is either not hitting another marble out of the ring, or hitting one out but the shooter stays in. The game ends when all of the marbles are won. If the shooter stays in the ring, that is treated just as any of the other marbles in the ring.

A variation of this is played with a square shooting area. The rules are the same as above except that if a shooter stays in the square after shooting, that player loses the game. This game can also be played in a triangle.

"Hit and Span" is also a popular marble game. In this, a first player pitches his marble and the others try to get within the span of a hand of any of the former marbles. When he does, he captures that marble, and this eliminates that player who has been captured.

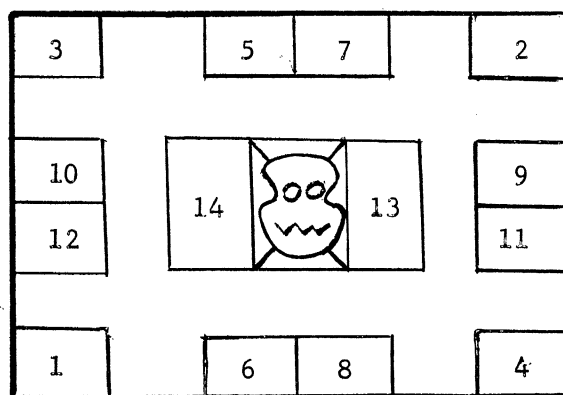
Another game is "Roly Poly." In this, four holes are dug in any relationship to each other. They are designated as first hole, second hole, etc. The object of the game is to roll the marble into each of the holes consecutively, starting from a predetermined spot. If a pitch is made that does not go into a hole, that marble is lost, but stays on the field, as someone else may help you by knocking it in. When you shoot into the first hole, you stand there and shoot for the second. The first one to shoot all four holes wins all the marbles on the field.

"Shooting the Line" is a further game played with marbles. A line is drawn and all the players shoot one or two marbles toward it. Whoever gets closest without going over it captures all of the other marbles.

There are not many places in which there is enough ground so that marbles can be played. Consequently, many of the games described here are also to be observed played on the street with bottle-tops rather than marbles. "Shooting the Line," for instance, is often to be thus observed, with the same rules except that the players shoot until someone has topped the line.

#### Dead Box or Dead Block

This game seems to be American in origin. See Brewster, 115, for the game as collected in New York.



Any number of players may play. Player takes a bottle-top and, standing in 1, shoots for 2. If he gets it wholly in 2, he shoots for 3, and so on. Not getting the bottle-top in the square ends the turn of the player. The object of the game is to be the first to shoot from 1 to 14 and back again, then to shoot into the "dead block" which has the skele-

ton head in the center. If a player lands in the dead block before he has made the full circuit, he must stay there until someone knocks him out. The person that knocks him out skips five blocks.

### Skogogee

This is simply the children's name for a competitive game of tops. As Brewster has pointed out, the spinning of tops is an extremely ancient children's pastime, at least as old as Troy and Rome. It is also widely found throughout the world. For games similar to the one here presented see Brewster, 149-51 (Ind.); Botkin (TNET), 758; Daiken, 49-55; Gomme, I, 186, 218; II, 229; Holbrook, 31; Lovett, 45; Sutton-Smith, 122 (N.Z.).

One player spins top. The others throw their tops at it, while spinning, trying to knock the first one down. The first man is dared to throw when the others say to him, "Skogogee toes, bloody nose." If he then doesn't throw top, the others throw theirs at his toes. Eventually, the object is to knock the lead center out of the first top. Then that top is called a "plug-ugly" because the "plug" has been knocked out of the center.

There are other top games which simply call for a variety of tricks done with it. The most common games are to see who can spin his longest and who can pick it up on his palm and keep it spinning longest. Another game, not played too often, is to throw the spinning tops into the trolley tracks while the trolley is coming. The flattened lead plugs which result are carried around as part of the numberless treasures used for trades among the boys.

### Half-ball

This is played with half of a rubber ball and a broomstick, and usually only two players are involved. One pitches the ball, and the other attempts to hit it. This is usually played on a narrow street, and the designation for "hits" are arrived at beforehand. Sometimes they are marked off with chalk on the buildings involved. They are arrived at by height, the lowest "hit" being a "single," the next a "double," and so on. Thus, this is one of the many ball games taking its scoring system from baseball. An "out" is achieved by one strike, or by the pitcher catching the ball on the fly. Three outs to an inning, nine innings to a game.

### Ball Over the Roof

This is the remains of the game usually called "Annie Over," "Anthony Over," or "Hailey Over," with much of the team contest element lost. For a description of this game and its history, see: Boyd, 35; Botkin (TNEF), 751; Brewster, 84 (Kansas) (listing of analogues); Comme, I, 53 (Burly Whush); HF, 7:86 (Ill.); JAF, 58:154 (Ontario); Marran, 97; NEP, #7, 1-2 (Neb.); Newell, 181 (conn.); Mason and Mitchell (Active Games), 272; PTFLS, 17:148.

Boys break up into two sides, and each stands on one side of a house. The ball is thrown by one member of one side over the roof, as he yells, "coming over" or "over the roof." The other side scrambles to see who can catch the ball coming over. The one who captures the ball, whether he catches it or not, throws it back. There was only one house in the neighborhood on which this could be played, and that was fenced in such a way that the usual running around the house as in

"Anthony Over" could not be done, but there was no evidence that the game in its older form was known to the players.

### Boys Games

#### The Individual Against the Group

##### Handball

There are two types of handball played in the neighborhood. In the first, any number of players may participate. A court is marked off, usually on the side of a building. The players arrange themselves in rotation. The first one hits the ball against the side of the house. If the ball bounces within the playing range, the second must also hit the ball against the wall in the same way. It cannot bounce before it hits the wall. A miss is registered by exceeding the boundaries or by not hitting the ball against the wall without a bounce, or by missing the ball on turn. A miss counts a point and a player reaching five is out. A variation on this which is often played is that the ball must hit the ground before it hits the wall, thus making the strategy involved quite different.

The second type is played on the same court with the same number of players. Once again, the players arrange themselves in rotation. The serve is the same, but each subsequent return is much faster, because the returner must first bounce the ball twice in his palm (without catching it) before he returns it. Because of this he can get more

force and accuracy in his shots. Anyone who reaches ten (or fifteen in some cases) is out. One player can put another out by hitting him with the ball instead of returning it to the wall. Thus, the players try to stay away from the court until their turn.

### Baby in the Air

This game has much in common with "Anthony Over" described above. They both may come from the game of "Burly Whush," described in Gomme, I, 53. It also has much in common with a game called "Roll-Ball" or "Hat Ball," in which hats are used or holes are dug which are assigned to represent each player. The ball is rolled toward the hats, and the one in whose hat it goes must take the ball and hit another with it or he got a stone put in his hat; three stones there and he was out. See Brewster, 84-6 (Ill.); Newell, 183 (New England); Sutton-Smith, 150 (N.Z.)

Any number may play this game. Each player is given a number. One number is not given. The person chosen as leader gives the numbers and throws the ball up the first time. He throws the ball and calls a number. The person who has the number which has been called must catch the ball before it hits the ground. If he does so he can throw it up again, calling another number, and the person who has that number must do as his predecessor did. If he does not, he must capture the ball and yell "stop" or "freeze" so that the players who have been running away will stop. Then he must try to hit one of the other players. Sometimes, before doing so he will be allowed to take three running steps toward whoever he is throwing at. If he then does not hit the other with his throw, he gets a "whack" from each player. If he does, then the one who has been hit gets the "whack." The one at whom the ball is being thrown cannot move his feet, and if he does is a loser. Another

method of losing is to call the number which has not been assigned to anyone. Sometimes this is treated as a full miss, and sometimes it simply makes it necessary for the caller to get the ball and to try to hit another player.

### Tag

Tag is the prototype of the games of the chaser and the chased. As many have pointed out (see, for instance, Bett [NRT], 41), the impulse behind this game seems to have been that the "it" character represented the Devil or a witch, and that "iron tag" and "wood tag," some of the earliest forms of the game, are so constructed because their signs of safety are common ways of exorcizing the Devil.

For a consideration and description of the various forms of tag, see: AA (o.s.), 279 (D.C.); Bancroft, 190; Bett (NRT), 41; Boyd, 17; Brand, II, 263; Brewster, 63-9; Cary, 48-51; Douglas, 76 (London); Daiken, 2, 6-7; Earle, 344; Games and Play, 39; Gardner, 247; Gomme, II, 292; Gutch, 148 (Yorkshire); HF, 7:84-5 (Ill.); 8:18 (Me.); JAF, 4:222 (N.Y.); Johnson (EPG), 102-3; Kingsland, 182; LaSalle, 36-8; MacLagan, 207-9 (Argyleshire); Manual, 84; Mason and Mitchell (Active Games), 247, 248; Myers and Bird, 310; Newell, 158-9; Ross, 15; Social Plays, 43; Smith, 133-7.

One person is designated as "it," usually through choosing-out rhyme or by footrace to the corner. "It" then must tag one of the others, who, on being tagged, becomes "it." Often a tag on the head or feet is considered no tag, these members of the body being "poison." The most common form of tag is that in which nothing makes the players immune from being tagged. There are a number of variations that do use these immunities. "Stoop tag" has the same rules, for instance, except that one cannot be tagged if in the stooping position. "Hopping tag," "Iron tag," "Step tag," and "Walking tag" all describe the type of immunity used in that particular game, or the restrictions on the mode of pursuit.



### Oh, Mr. Fox

This game seems to be a corruption of the game of "Fox in the Morning" (see Brown, I, 78) or "Fox and Goose" (see Gomme, I, 139) or any of a number of games in which the players pretend to be animals and one animal pursues the others. In most of these games, as here, a dialogue precedes the chase. For a similar girls game, see "Old Mommy Witch," in which a dialogue precedes a "tag"-like situation.

A "fox" is chosen by choosing out. He then lies down on the top step of "home base." The others yell to him, from their retreat, usually about ten or fifteen feet away:

Oh, Mr. Fox, are you ready?  
I'm just waking up. (he replies)

Oh, Mr. Fox, are you ready?  
I'm just brushing my teeth.

Oh, Mr. Fox, are you ready?  
I'm just putting on my clothes.

Oh, Mr. Fox, are you ready?  
I'm just washing my face.

Oh, Mr. Fox, are you ready?  
I'm just eating my breakfast.

Oh, Mr. Fox, are you ready?  
I'm stepping on the first step. (he begins to come down)

Oh, Mr. Fox, are you ready?  
I'm stepping on the second step.

Oh, Mr. Fox, are you ready?  
I'm stepping on the third step, and here I come.

The game then proceeds as "Step tag." The above dialogue is done almost ad libitum by the one chosen as "fox," but this pattern, derived from the lives of the children, is the most common.

### Chase the White Horse Silver

This game is an amalgamation of "Leapfrog" and "tag." One "horse" is chosen, usually by foot-race. He gets down on his knees, and the

others jump over his back, as in "Leapfrog," while shouting, "Number one, going over; number two, going over, etc." Then each picks the name of a car, and shouts it as he goes over the "horse." Then they pick colors, and repeat the process. The third time, the players smack the hind end of the "horse," shouting "Number one going down, etc." After the last person goes over, the horse chases the others and the first one he catches is the next horse.

A variant of the game is sometimes called "Captain, Captain." This is played the same way, but the things yelled during play are different. These are, in succession, "Captain number one," "knife and fork" (making slashes on the hind end of the "horse"), "slice the cheese" (running finger along his spine), "hang'im up" (pull by collar), "smack-a-rump," and "chase the white horse."

### Hide and Go Seek

This amusement is encountered throughout the English-speaking world and, indeed, has analogues throughout the world as Brewster points out. It is often known by other names, most often as "I Spy, though there are other similar games which are known by that name also. It is perhaps the most common recreation of children in the Camingerly area, aside from jumping rope and ball, and this is probably true for a large part of this country. Puckett mentions it as a common game among the Southern Negroes.

For descriptions and references to this game, see: Bancroft, 103; Boyd, 72; Brewster, 142-5 (Nebr.); Brown, I, 37 (N.C.); Cary, 20-1; Earle, 347; Gomme, I, 1, 211; HF, 7:90 (Ill.); 8:13 (Tenn., Ind., Ill., Me.); Halliwell, 213; Hudson (specimens), 117 (Miss.); JAF, 4:226 (N.Y.); Johnson (EPG), 100; Kemmerer, 89; LaSalle, 42; Marran, 134; MacLagan, 211; NFP, #7, 8 (Nebr.); Newell, 160 (discussion of origins from as early as second century, A.D.); Puckett, 55 (mentioned); Smith, 36; Strutt, 301; Wood (AMG), 103 (rhymes only).

One person is chosen as "it," usually by counting-out rhyme. He must hide his head and count quickly to 100 (or 200 by twos, or 500 by tens). Then he announces that he is about to go chasing the others who have hid in a number of possible fashions:

Apples, peaches, and pumpkin pie.<sup>3</sup>

Who not ready, holler "I." (If no one says "I," he can proceed in his search. If there is someone, he has to keep his eyes hidden until the clear sign is given.)

or

Two pounds of sugar, two pounds of soap.

Who not ready, holler "billy goat." (See JAF, 24:141)

or

Peach pie, applie pie.

Who not ready, holler "I."

or

Twenty-four horses in a stable,  
One fell down and broke his navel.

Ready or not, here I come,

Anyone around my base is "it." (See Johnson [FCSHI], 166)

or

My mother, your mother

Hanging up clothes,

My mother punched your mother

In the nose.

Did it hurt? (If no, then rhyme has to be repeated,

allowing the answerer to hide further.)

---

<sup>3</sup>This formula is related to the divination rhyme:

Apple tree, pear tree,

Pumpkin pie.

How many years

Before I die?

Addy, 82

Then "it" goes in pursuit of the others, and when he sees one, he must run to the place where he has done the counting (the base) and say, "5-10, I see so and so." That person then is caught and must stay around the base. The only he can be freed is for another player to touch the base before "it" can. A typical trick of the game is to sneak to the base ahead of "it," even though no one is yet caught, almost as a taunt to the abilities of "it." This is why after most of the above rhymes the caution is given to those who are still around the base, waiting to pull a trick such as this.

Another method of beginning the game is to put one of the players against the wall with his face hidden. Then someone says, while making appropriate figures on his back:

I draw a circle 'round the old man's back.  
Two eyes, one nose, who put the...mouth.  
Guess who tapped?

Someone from the group puts in the "mouth," and the face-hider must guess who it was. After the guess is made, he is asked how far he should go and by what manner (a choice of hopping, skipping, running, or crawling). If he has guessed right, the person he has named has to carry out his instructions; if not, he has to do them himself. While one or the other is doing so the others hide.

### Tin Can Johnny

This is really just another form of "Hide and Go Seek," most often called "Kick the Can." As it has an independent existence parallel to the other, it is listed separately here. For a discussion of this form,

see Brewster, 47-8 (Ark.); Brown, I, 39 (N.C.); Gomme, I, 401 ("Mount the Tin"), 412 ("New Squat," Yorkshire); HF, 7:89 (Ill.); JAF, 4:230.

"It" is picked by a footrace to the corner. Last man is "it." First man kicks a tin-can, and everyone hides while "it" retrieves it, and the can serves as home base of the game. The play then proceeds as in "Hide and Go Seek."

### Buck, Buck

As many have pointed out, this is the game Petronius Arbiter describes for other than game purposes in his Satyricon, with the famous lines, Bucca, bucca, quot sunt hic? So also: Balfour and Thomas, 104; Botkin (TAF), 800 (from New Yorker); Brown, I, 59 (N.C.) (description of foreign analogues); Gomme, I, 46 (throughout England and Scotland); FLJ, 5:59; Gutch, 139; Hudson (Specimens), 114 (Miss.); Johnson (EPG), 132; Newell, 148; New Yorker, Vol. 8, No. 39, p.33 ("Buck, buck, you lousy muck/How many fists have I got up: 1, 2, or none?"); Taylor, 67.

One member of group leans over and another jumps on top of him, yelling as he does, "Buck, buck, how many fingers do I hold up?" He may hold up one, two, or three fingers. If the player underneath guesses correctly, then the person on top is the victim in the next game. If not, the one on the bottom remains in that position and tries to guess when another player repeats the formula.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CHILDREN'S SONGS AND RHYMES

There are two types of children's lore, that learned from their elders and that learned from their peers. Included in the first class are the nursery rhymes, mnemonic rhymes, act-out rhymes and many of the catches, tricks, conundrums, and riddles. In the second are the numerous doggerel rhymes which somehow assume a functional role in the life of the young, the taunt, the parody, the clothesline verse, the rhyme of defiance and smut. It is often difficult in individual cases to determine into which class it fits. I have, therefore, simply placed the ones which I know to be learned from older members of the community at the beginning of the chapter and placed the questionable ones next to them. In the case of such material as the catches and tricks, I have chosen to keep them together in a section apart. Any of the act-out rhymes could as easily been included in the game chapter because of the repeated movements involved, but I have chosen to include them here because of the prime importance of the rhyme.

A number of rhymes here included do not, at first glimpse, seem to be the sort which children generally transmit, that is, the "dirty rhyme." It has been too long overlooked that children often use many "bad" words and tell "dirty" jokes and rhymes. It is difficult for the adult collector to come by children who will recite these rhymes as they know that adults do not approve of children saying them. Thus, I have only gotten a few of them, and those surreptitiously. They are notable for their

lack of understanding of the words they are using and the meaningfulness of the word combinations. They are only understood as forbidden, and thus, give the same sort of thrill as that other type of "dirty" verse, the "dirty drawers" rhymes.

### Children's Rhymes

#### I

##### A

This is one of the most common games to be played with little babies. It is, of course, an attempt to teach the baby a first motor response, the clapping of the hands. On the mention of the first letter of the baby's name, the letter is marked on the baby's stomach in an effort to make it laugh. Thomas, after Kerr, attempts to relate the rhyme to an old Saxon source, but is not convincing.

Botkin (TAF), 85 (from Johnson [WTSNE]); Brown, I, 198 (N.C.); JAF, 31: 62 (Ontario); Johnson (EPG) (mentioned); Johnson (WTSNE); Kerr, 124; Marvin, 50; Opie (ODNR), 341-2 (early history and bibliography); TFSB, X, #3, 8 (Tenn.); Talley, 154; Thomas, 129; WF, 7:51.

Patty cake, patty cake, baker's man.  
 Bake a cake as fast as you can.  
 Roll and pat and mark it with a "P,"  
 And put it in the oven for Pudgy and me. (18)

##### B

This is performed while counting on a baby's toes. During the "wee, we" line the performer runs her finger up the baby's legs and tickles the stomach. Thomas relates the rhyme unconvincingly to doings between England and France in 1669-70. For a discussion of this type of finger-rhyme, see SFQ, 5:221-34.

AA (o.s.), I:275-6 (D.C.); Botkin (TAF), 782 (from Johnson [WTSNE]; Brown, I, 186 (N.C.); CFQ, I; 293-4 (Cal.); Chambers, 20; FL 24:78; 43:257; FLF, 4:140; 7:256; Ford (CRGSS), 11 (Scotland); Gregor, 14-15 (N.E. Scotland); Gullen, 8; Halliwell, 68; JAF, 31:59, 114 (Canada); 47:334-5 (Ga.); Johnson (EPG), 85; Johnson (FCSHI), 184; Johnson (WTSNE), 184; MacLagan, 113 (Argyleshire); O'Suillibhain, 681 (Ireland); Rackham, 80-1; SFQ, 3:182-3; Thomas, 236; WF, 7:51.

This little pig went to market,  
 This little pig stayed home.  
 This little pig had roast beef.  
 This little pig had none.  
 This little pig cried, "Wee, wee, wee," all the way home. (18)

## G

A common hand-game, the actions of which are in parentheses after each line. It seems to be of some antiquity, though Newell seems to have been the first to collect it, in 1882. There is a marked similarity to it and the rhyme concerning Henry VIII, "He ate the church/He ate the steeple/He ate the priests/And all the people." (Thomas, 77) A similar Italian game has often been noted.

AA (o.s.), 1:275 (D.C.); Botkin (TAF), 789 (from Johnson [WTSNE]); Brown, I, 187 (N.C.); Gullen, 5 (with the final lines, "Here's the pulpit, here are the stairs/And there's the minister saying his prayers"); HF, 8:31 (Ind.); Johnson (EPG); Johnson (WTSNE), 195; Newell, 138; Opie (ODNR), 125; SFQ, 1:60 (Neb.); 3:184 (Ind.); WF, 7:51; Wood (AMG), 107.

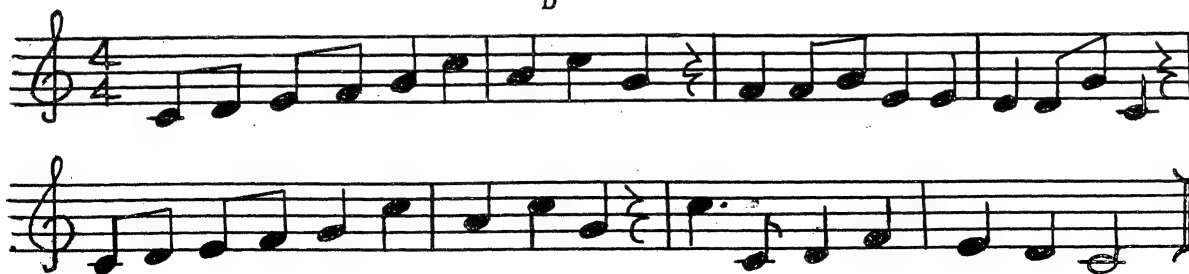
Here's the church, (hands like in prayer,  
 (fingers intertwined.)

Here's the steeple, (raise first fingers  
 together.)

Open the church, (turn hands over, still  
 interlocked.)

And see all the people. (wiggle fingers.)

## D



I am a little teapot,  
 Short and stout.  
 I have a little handle, (one arm akimbo)  
 I have a little spout. (other arm up like a  
 goose neck.)

When I get all steamed up,  
 Then I shout,  
 "Tip me over (lean toward side of the spout)  
 And pour me out."



## E

This game has often been collected but never in this form. Usually, it is concerned with a game using pieces of paper stuck to the ends of the fingers. Kerr (and Thomas after him) relates this to an incident in the reign of Henry VIII. Sung to the tune of "Baa Baa Black Sheep."

AA (o.s.), 1:27 (D.C.); Addy, 77; Beckwith, 12, 78 (Jamaica); Brown I, 185 (N.C.); Creighton, 77 (Nova Scotia); Eckenstein, 22 (relating that Forster, Oliver Goldsmith's bibliographer, said that Goldsmith knew this rhyme [Life of Goldsmith, II, 71]); Gullen, 10 (two variants); HF, 8:31 (Ind.); Halliwell, 66; JAF, 31:110 (Ontario); Lippincott's Magazine, 38:334 (D.C.); MacLagan, 224 (Argyleshire); Marvin, 62, 136; Montgomerie (SC), 67 (Scotland); Opie (ODNR), 147 (gives history with extensive bibliography from circa 1765); SFQ, 3:184; 19:161 (Discussion as divination rhyme); Sutton-Smith, 133 (N.Z.); WF, 7:51.

Two little blackbirds sitting on a hill,  
(hold up two fingers.)

One named Jack and the other named Jill.  
(point one finger each time "one" is sung.)

Fly away, Jack; fly away, Jill. (arms akimbo)  
Come back, Jack; come back, Jill.

Two little blackbirds, sitting on a hill, (as  
before)

One named Jack and the other named Jill. (22)

## F

An old divination rhyme, to determine what kind of person you are to marry by counting buttons. Often found connected to custom of counting daisy petals and other such devices. Similar to jump-rope rhyme, page 105.

Bergen, 42; Bolton, 120 (Pa.); Brown, I, 179 (N.C.) (foreign analogues); FL, 24:81; 49:153 (Nebr.); Folkways, 7029; JAF, 15:113; 36:21 (N.Y.); 40:42 (Ohio); 47:385 (Pa.); 52:121 (Iowa); 60:37 (Mo.); Johnson (WTSNE), 50; Newell, 105; Opie (LLS), 319; Opie (ODNR), 404-5 (extensive bibliography of similar divination rhymes using professions).

Doctor, lawyer, Indian chief,  
Rich man, poor man, beggarman, thief.

## G

This is a chant said while hitting the tips of fingers. The left hand is held up with the palm held toward the face. The first finger of the right hand touches each of the fingers from the little finger to the thumb and back again. The "whoops" then come between the first finger and the thumb, and is indicated by the finger following the cavity between those two. Performed as quickly as possible.

Whoops, johnny, johnny, johnny, johnny,  
Johnny, johnny, johnny, johnny, whoops, johnny,  
Whoops, johnny, etc.

## H

For full notes, see this as ball-bouncing rhyme, page 99. On the "sea" words in the first singing, the player salutes; on the second, she hits the crotch of the arm; on the third, hit knee; pat stomach on fourth; and all repeated in order on the fifth repetition.

A sailor went to sea, sea, sea,  
To see what he could see, see, see.  
And all that he could see, see, see,  
Was the bottom of the deep blue sea. (12)

## I

The ending is obviously based on a popular song convention.

Hey, Josie.  
Somebody calling my name? (hand to ear)  
Hey, Josie.  
Must be playing a game.  
Hey, Josie,  
Wanted on the phone.  
If it ain't my baby, (shaking finger)  
Then I sure ain't home.  
Sin City, listen to the ticking of the clock,  
Tick tock, doo-what-ee-what-ee. (21)

## II

This next group of rhymes are all directed against the teacher, and school in general. They are a common way of reacting against authority and of boasting at the same time.

## A

This is for the Army. (salute)  
 This is for the Navy. (hand on heart)  
 This is for the preacher. (hands in praying position)  
 This is for the teacher. (make a fist)

## B

This is the most common rhyme directed at teachers, found throughout the English-speaking world, usually at the end of the school year. Opie (LLS), 299 has a rhyme much like this, as well as longer rhymes in the same terms. Sutton-Smith (45) has collected much the same in New Zealand. The personalities recited can differ greatly, the teacher and the principle often changing roles.

No more pencils, no more books,  
 No more teacher's dirty looks.  
 Tell the principle he was swell.  
 Tell the teacher to go to hell.

## C

These next obviously derive from the tricking done on April Fool's Day, but they have gained wider use simply as derisive rhymes. For other rhymes of the day, see Opie (LLS), 247.

April Fool,  
 Go to school.  
 Tell the teacher she's a fool.  
 If she hits you with a mop  
 Run downstairs and call a cop.

April Fool,  
 Go to school.  
 Tell the teacher she's a fool.  
 If she hits you with a rule,  
 Pack your books and leave that school.

April Fool,  
 Go to school.  
 Tell your teacher she's a fool.  
 If she hits you with a bat,  
 Tell the teacher she's a rat.

## III

The next few rhymes are ones of general defiance, usually directed toward one of the group.

## A

Hiya, captain (saluting)  
 How's the ship?  
 'Scuse me, captain,  
 My finger slipped. (thumb your nose)

## B

To someone trying to get past a group on the street.

Mother John, Mother John  
 Don't go too fast,  
 'Cause I got your ticket  
 So you can't get past.

## C

See Talley, 94, and references to "Railroad Bill," page 216.

My name is Bill.  
 I come from the hill.  
 I never ran,  
 And I damn shall never will.

## D

Directed by a group to someone, as they are walking by.

Get out the way before we knock you down.  
 We are rough, we are tough,  
 We are the girls don't take no stuff.  
 So take off your shoes and smell our feet,  
 For we are the girls of Waverly Street.

## IV

The next serve a specific social function that is self-evident. The first is a common retort to name calling. See also Opie (LLS), 160; Oxford, 403.

## A

Sticks and stones will break my bones,  
But names will never hurt me.

## B

See Hyatt, 652 (Ill.); Northall, 315; Opie (LLS), 190 (N.Y.).

Tattle-tale, tattle-tale,  
Sit behind the bull's tail.

## C

You're so newsy you ought to be in the newspaper.

## D

See Brown, I, 176 (N.C.); JAF, 58:125 (N.Y.); 60:36 (Mo.); Opie (LLS), 188; WF, 12:16 (N.Z.); 13:191 (Cal.); Whitney and Bullock, 156 (Md.).

Cry baby, cry.  
Wipe your dirty eyes.

## E

See WF, 14:126 (Me.).

Cry baby, cry.  
Suck your momma's titty.

## F

Twinkle, twinkle, little star.  
Who in hell do you think you are?

## G

The following is said sarcastically to someone making airs:

I'm my momma's sweetheart,  
Don't you think I'm sweet (or cute)

With bouquet on my shoulder  
And dimples in my cheeks.

## V

The following group consists of taunts based on the person's name or the color of his clothes. As explained in Chapter Two, this is a common practice, and many of the ones not included here concern making a nonsensical rhyme with the person's name. For similar rhymes see Hale, 142 ff.: Opie (LLS), 302, 352; WF, 13:195 (Cal.); 14:207 (Ala.). The first taunt is found also in Hyatt, 643; Withers (COR); Wood (FAFR), 24.

Bert, Bert, sitting on a fence,  
Trying to make a dollar out of ninety-nine cents.

Johnny is a dope.  
He ate a cake of soap.  
He died last night with a bubble in his throat.

Red, red, peed in bed.  
Wiped it up with jelly-bread.

Yellow, yellow,  
Kissed a fellow.

Yellow, yellow,  
Don't forget your umbrella.

Yellow, yellow,  
Cinderella,  
Went upstairs to kiss a fellow. (See jump-rope rhyme,

Brown, I, 171.)

Green, green,  
You're a dream.

Green, green,  
You're a queen.

Green, green,  
You are mean.

Blue, blue,  
I love you.

Blue, blue,  
God loves you.

Brown, brown,  
Go to town  
With your britches hanging down.

Black, black,  
Sat on a tack.

Black, black,  
Let your mother beat your back.

White, white,  
You sure are right.

White, white,  
You're a mite.

White, white,  
Get married tonight.

Pink, pink,  
You sure stink.

Pink, pink,  
You're a mink.

Plaid, plaid,  
You make me mad.

## VI

The next group of rhymes seem to exist only for entertainment purposes. The first one seems to be an adaptation of a popular southern rhyme, which itself derives from a stock opening for folk-tales (see Johnson [FCSHI], 134, 155). See Botkin (TAF), 665 (from Johnson [FCSHI], 134); Bowman, 152; Hale, 75; JAF, 31:148 (Ontario); 32:376 (Va.); 40:293; Johnson (FCSHI), 134, 155; Whitney and Bullock, 154 (Md.); Withers, 21.

## A

Once upon a time  
A goose drank wine  
The monkey did the shimmy  
On a trolley car line.  
The trolley car broke,  
The monkey got choked.  
They all went to heaven  
In a little green boat. (or tin boat)

## B

For a full consideration of this rhyme, see jump-rope rhyme, page 114.

Last night, the night before,  
A big, fat monkey knocked on my door.  
I went downstairs to let him in.  
He hit me on the head with a rolling pin.

## C

This little rhyme is a vestige of what once seems to have been a popular form of variable punch line jokes, much like the "knock-knock" series. For other rhymes beginning, "I know something that I won't tell," see: Brown, I, 194 (N.C.); Chambers, 119 (Scotland); JAF, 31: 532 (Mich.); 60:35 (Mo.); 63:426 (Mo.); Justus, 29; WF, 13:195 (Cal.); 14:127 (Me.); Withers, 30; Wood (AMG), 22; Wood (MGO), n.p.

I know something that I won't tell.  
I pushed a button and ran like hell.

## D

This rhyme is usually associated with a jump-rope game, the description of coming in and going out being functional in that case. For printings of this rhyme, see CFQ, 1:247 (Cal.); Evans, 3 (Cal.); Folkways, 7029; Hale, 59 (N.Y.); WF, 14:15 (Cal.)

There was a little boy,  
His name was "swallowed a pin."  
He swallowed a pin.  
The doctor came in,  
And the nurse came in,  
And the lady with the big, fat purse came in.  
The doctor went out,  
The nurse went out,  
The lady with the big, fat purse went out. (22)

## E

This one never failed to bring peals of laughter. See also Botkin (TAF), 798 (from New Yorker); Hale, 67 (N.Y.); JAF, 40:23; New Yorker, Vol. 8, No. 39, p. 34.



Momma, momma, pin a rose on me.  
 Two little boys are stuck on me.  
 One is blind and the other can't see.  
 So momma, momma, pin a rose on me. (29)

## VII

This is a rhyme that is often printed in Mother Goose books, but in this version illustrates some interesting changes from any previously printed texts. The Opies point out that in its original form it was a rhyme used to taunt the Welsh by their neighbors.

Halliwell, 26; Marsh, 44 (with a game); Marvin, 105; Opie (ODNR), 400-1 (discussion of origins and bibliography of early references); Rackham, 101; Thomas, 324.

Billy was a rich man  
 Billy was a thief.  
 Billy came to my house  
 And stole a piece of beef.  
 I went to Billy's house,  
 Billy was not at home  
 Billy came to my house  
 And stole a marrowbone.  
 I went to Billy's house  
 Billy was not in.  
 Billy came to my house  
 And stoled a silver pin.  
 I went to Billy's house  
 And Billy was in bed.  
 I took a stick  
 And swung it 'pon his head.

## VIII

See also hand-clapping game, page 241. The quiet resolution of the piece suggests that this may have been a blues song originally.

I wish I had a nickel  
 I wish I had a dime.  
 I wish I had a lover boy  
 To love me all the time.  
 Now I have a nickel.  
 Now I have a dime.

Now I have a lover boy  
 To love me all the time.  
 My mother took my nickel.  
 My mother took my dime.  
 My sister took my lover boy  
 Who loved me all the time.  
 I have to wash the dishes.  
 I have to scrub the floor.  
 I have to take my lover-boy  
 From off my sister's door.

## IX

This may be related to the game, page 148.

Old Mommy Witch  
 Believe it if you can,  
 Knocked out the window  
 And ran, ran, ran.  
 Went out of the sky  
 With toes in the air.  
 Boom went the broomstick,  
 Meow went the cat.  
 Lots of fun  
 When Old Mommy Witch come. (12)

## X

This rhyme is one of a series which all start the same: "Here I stand." For this and others in this form, see Brown, 193 (N.C.); Hyatt, 646 (Ill.); JAF, 47:340 (Ga.); Randolph, III; Scarborough, 137-8 (Tex., as part of a singing game); Talley 3, 153; White, 179 (Ala.) (relates rhyme to a minstrel song, "Possum up a gum tree, saucy, fat and dirty/ Come kiss me, gals, or I'll run like a turkey").

Here I stand, raggedy and dirty,  
 If you don't come and kiss me, I'll run like a turtle.

## XI

This is the common imprecation against rain. The Opies have traced the rhyme to 1659. See AA (o.s.), 270 (D.C.); Addy, 118; Chambers, 13 (Scotland); FL, 16:459 (Argyleshire); Hale, 243 (N.Y.);

Halliwell, 120, 248; Henderson, 24; JAF, 31:148 (Ontario), 60:36 (Mo.); Marvin, 164; Opie (ODNR), 360 (discussion of origin and distribution); Puckett, 75 (from Chambers); Whitney and Bullock, 155 (Md.).

Rain, Rain, go away.  
Come back another day.

## XII

Brown, I, 193-4 (N.C.).

When I was a little girl,  
My mother took a little stick and made me cry.  
But now I'm a big girl  
My mother can't do it.  
But my father took a big stick  
And lay right to it.

## XIII

This is a rhyme which is usually told about "Nebuchudnezzar" or "Pontius Pilate," but somehow Abraham Lincoln has insinuated himself into this brief tale. See Bolton, 114 (N.Y.), 116 (N.Y., New England); Brown, I, 314 (N.C.); JAF, 10:321 (Pa.); 24:152 (Pa.); Opie (ISE), 17; Wood (AMG), 53.

Abraham Lincoln was king of the Jews;  
He wore ten-ton britches and brogan shoes.

## XIV

The next three rhymes are all related, and belong to the "dirty drawers" kind of humor that seems to appeal to children wherever curiosity is aroused about the contents of clotheslines. The type of logical progression involved in these rhymes is similar to that in the rhyme of "Old Obadiah" (see for instance, Brown, I, 199).

## A

## 1

Just before your mother died,  
She called you to her side.  
She gave you a pair of drawers.

Before your father died.  
 She put 'em in the sink.  
 The sink begin to stink.  
 She put 'em on the track.  
 The train backed back.  
 She put 'em on the fence.  
 Ain't seen 'em since.

## 2

Maggie's dirty drawers.  
 She sent them to Santa Claus.  
 He sent them back,  
 'Cause they was too black.  
 Put 'em in a tub.  
 Tub say "rub-a-dub-dub."  
 Put 'em in the sink.  
 Water turned to ink.  
 Put 'em on the line.  
 Sun refused to shine.  
 Put 'em on a limb,  
 Out walked Jungle Jim.  
 Put 'em in the can.  
 Out walked Charlie Chan.  
 Put 'em in the trunk.  
 Mothballs came out drunk.  
 Put 'em in the bed.  
 Bed-bugs came out dead.

(24)

## 3

The day that Susie died,  
 She called you to her side.  
 She offered you her dirty underdrawers.  
 They smelled like surplus cheese,  
 And they were baggy at the knees.  
 On the day that Susie died.

## B

## 1

This next rhyme shows a similar preoccupation with underclothes. Though I have encountered no previous reporting of this rhyme, in my childhood in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia, we had a similar rhyme: "Ladies and Gentlemen, take my advice/Pull down your bloomers and slide on the ice." The rhyme, as we have it here poses the problem of rhymes told by children concerning smutty subjects before they even understand them.

Listen little children, take my advice.  
 Pull down your britches, and slide on the ice.  
 If the ice is too cold, slide up a pole.  
 And don't let the police look up your hole.

## 2

Another "clothesline" verse. In my childhood, we said a similar rhyme: "Heigh-ho, Silverware/Tonto lost his underwear/Found it in the Delaware/Dried it on the 'lectric chair/What the hell do I care."

High-ho, everywhere  
 Tonto lost his underwear.  
 Tonto say, "Me no care,  
 Lone Ranger buy me 'nother pair."

## 3

Put your feet on a rock,  
 Let the boys feel your cock.  
 Don't be ashamed  
 'Cause your mother do the same.  
 When your stomach turn red  
 That's the baby's head.  
 When your stomach turn blue  
 That's the baby coming through. (12)

## XV

The next two rhymes are comic dialogues and could be as easily included in the next section on catches and tricks, for their purpose is to trick the initiate into saying that he or she has eaten something awful, something terribly amusing to children.

Botkin (TAF), 779 (from Johnson); Hyatt (Ill.); Johnson (WISNE); Northall, 317; Opie (LLS), 156; Tidwell, 526 (from Hyatt); WF, 13:193 (Cal.); 14:127 (Me.); Whitney and Bullock, 138 (Md.).

## A

What's your name?  
 Mary Jane.  
 Where do you live?  
 Down the lane. (or drain)  
 What's your number?  
 Cucumber.  
 What do you eat?

Pig's feet.  
 What do you drink?  
 Bottle of ink.  
 What's your dessert?  
 Pig's dirt.

## B

Brown, I, 173 (N.C.); FLJ, 7:253; JAF, 31:151 (Ontario); Johnson (WTSNE), 170; Opie (LLS), 65-6; O'Suilleabhain, 678, 683 (Ireland); Newell, 141.

There's a snake outside.  
 I oned it.  
 I twoed it.  
 I threed it.  
 I foured it.  
 I fived it.  
 I sixed it.  
 I sevened it.  
 I eight it.

(Ha, ha, she ate the snake.) (Depending on how initiated you were into this game and how much chance you were willing to take, the subjects could be as edible as ham, or as repulsive as "an old, dead cow.")

## XVI

The following are a series of catches and tricks, used by the children to best their peers (or the adults when they were given a chance). Many of them may have been taught them by an older person, an adult. They function similarly to riddles, and, indeed, would have been grouped together had riddles been collected from the children. As it is, all of the riddles which I collected were from older informants who claimed to have heard and used them as children for the same purpose as these catches, to show their cleverness at another's expense. For similar catches, see Botkin (TAF), 789; Johnson (WTSNE), 167-173; Opie (LLS), 57-72; WF, 13:195 (Cal.).

## A

This first is included in what the Opies would call "self incriminating traps," but then so might most of these. For similar ones, see Botkin (TAF), 789 (from Johnson [WTSNE]; WF, 13:195 (Cal.).

Could you read?  
 Could you write?  
 Could you smoke your daddy's pipe? (10)

## B

Count up to ten.  
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.  
 Your baby's named Rin Tin Tin.

## C

Say "washing machine."  
 Washing machine.  
 I'll bet you five dollars your  
 drawers ain't clean. (10)

## D

See what you dropped.  
 What?  
 A bucket of slop. (10)

## E

Hit my hand  
 (the other does)  
 You black frying pan. (10)

## F

Hit my hand  
 (the other does)  
 What did I say?  
 Hit my hand.  
 (he hits the other's hand harder)

## G

Say "A B C."  
 A B C.  
 You black hynee.

## H

Say, "first, second, third."  
 First, second, third.  
 You big fat terd.

## I

Botkin (TAF), 778 (from Johnson): Brown, I, 175 (N.C.); Clodd, 88; Johnson (WTSNE); WF, 20:37 (discussion as survival of belief in magical nature of names).

What's your name?  
 Puddin Tane (or Taffy Tane).  
 Ask me again, and I'll tell you the same.

## J

Put your hand on me.  
 A, B. C. D, E, F, G.  
 Keep your black hands off of me. (10)

## K

See the song, page 194 for a similar fascination with the names of coins.

Wanna make a nickle?  
 Buy a sour pickle.

You want a penny?  
 Go see Jack Benny.

You want a dime?  
 Buy a glass of wine.

Wanna make a quarter?  
 Get a glass of water.

## L

Look up. (does so)  
 Look down. (does so)  
 See my thumb. (Yes!)  
 Gee you're dumb. (10)



## M

Hyatt, 649; Opie (LLS), 62-3; Tidwell, 526 (from Hyatt); Withers, 168.

Look! (he does)  
 Made you look  
 You dirty crook.  
 You stole your mother's pocket book.  
 You turned it in, you turned it out.  
 Your turned it into sauerkraut.

## N

Someone's calling you.  
 Who?  
 Monkey in the zoo, look just like you. (10)

## O

I know where you live?  
 Where?  
 2222 Boogie Woogie Avenue. (or 33rd  
 and Terd)

## P

If I lived up here (pointing to the  
 other's brow)  
 And you lived down here, (pointing to  
 chin)  
 Would you come up and see me sometime?  
 (running finger up nose)

## Q

This is one of the "either way" tricks pointed out by the Opies (LLS), p. 71.

If there were twenty sick (26) sheep and  
 one died, how many were left?

If the answer is 25, the retort is, "No, 19," and vice versa.

## R

Botkin (TAF), 782 (from Johnson); Brown, I, 324 (N.C.); Fauset, 146 (Nova Scotia); JAF, 31:151 (Ontario); Johnson (WTSNE); N & Q, 10th Series, 4:77 (well known as schoolboys' catch for the innocent new boy or for our unwary sisters, circa 1855); Northall, 298; Opie (LLS), 59-60 (three English and one E. Tex. variants); Randolph and Spradley, 85; Wood (AMG), 92.

There were six tea (60) cups sitting on  
the table and one fell off, how many  
were left?

The answer is 5 (or 59).

## S

## 1

Adam and Eve and Pinch-Me-Tight,  
They all went out to the fights one night.  
Adam and Eve went back that night.  
Who was left at the fight?

"Pinch-Me-Tight," and answerer gets a pinch.

## 2

Adam and Eve and Pinch-Me-Tight.  
Went up the hill to spend the night.  
Adam and Eve came down the hill.  
Who was left?

## 3

Poncho and Cisco riding on horses.  
Cisco got hurt. Who didn't?

"Poncho," and answerer gets a punch.

## T

This is a "catch riddle...the person as it were tricked into thinking that he is being asked a conundrum and that an ingenious or far-fetched answer is expected of him." (Opie, LLS, 82). Of this type, this is certainly the most common.

Why did the chicken cross the road?  
To get to the other side.

Tongue Twisters

1

We're six slick chicks who say tricks clicks.

2

JAF, 31:62, 169; Fauset, 136; Hale, 251, 2.

She sells sea shells down by the sea shore.

3

Hale, 252; Halliwell, 55; Newton, 53 (with a game connected with rhyme); Opie (ODNR) gives full history of early printing.

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. How many pickled peppers did Peter Piper pick?

4

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers and a peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked. If Peter Pepper picked a peck of pickled peppers, where's the peck of pickled peppers that Peter Piper picked?

5

Fauset, 136.

The skunk set on a stump. The stump thought the skunk stunk, and the skunk thought the stump stunk.

6

Three buckets of blue-bugs blood.

7

Hale, 252; JAF, 31:63, 169; Wood (AMG), 3.

How many chucks could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?

Children's Songs

This section is notably short because 1) the children of the neighborhood, when they sing, usually perform rock-and-roll songs or ones which they learned in school; or 2) the traditional songs they do sing are connected with some game and are thus included in other sections. Nevertheless, some songs were collected which are both interesting and venerable.

I

This is also used in another variant as a hand-clapping song, page 237.

When Johnny-boy was one,  
He learned to suck his thumb.  
So thumbioca, thumbioca, half-past one.

When Johnny-boy was two,  
He learned to tie his shoe.  
So shoemioca, shoemioca, half-past two.

When Johnny-boy was three,  
He learned to climb a tree,  
etc.

When Johnny-boy was four,  
He learned to open the door,  
etc.

When Johnny-boy was five,  
He learned to stay alive,  
etc.

When Johnny-boy was six,  
He learned to play with sticks,  
etc.

When Johnny-boy was seven,  
He died and went to heaven,  
etc.

When Johnny-boy was eight,  
He jumped and climbed the gate,  
etc.

When Johnny-boy was nine,  
He fell upon a pine,  
etc.

When Johnny-boy was ten,  
He chopped and killed a hen,  
etc.

When Johnny-boy was eleven,  
His father went heaven,  
etc.

When Johnny-boy was twelve,  
He died and went to Hell,  
etc.

(18)

## II

JAF, 61:54 (N.C.) (as jump-rope rhyme); Lomax (OSC), 96; Wood (AMG), 63-5. See also "Hambone," hand-clapping game, page 243.



Momma, momma, have you heard,  
Poppa's gonna buy me a mocking bird.

If that mockingbird don't sing,  
Poppa's gonna buy me a diamond ring.

If that diamond ring don't shine,  
Poppa's gonna buy me a bottle of wine.

If that bottle of wine gets broke,  
Poppa's gonna buy me a nanny goat.

If that nanny goat runs away,  
Poppa's gonna beat your boominay.

If my boominay gets sore,  
Poppa's gonna take me to the druggist store.

If that druggist says you die,  
Poppa's gonna punch him in the eye.

If your eye turns red and blue,  
Poppa's gonna punch him in the other one, too.

## III

This, of course, is the venerable, "A moste Strange weddinge of the ffrogge and the mowse." For a full bibliography and discussion of this much printed and studied piece, see Kittredge's bibliographical note (JAF, 35:394-9); Payne's study of types (PTFLS, 5:5-48); Belden's headnotes (BSM, 494-5, and Brown, III, 154). This is clearly in Payne's category III, but the verses concerning the "stealing" of the wedding gown and about the various whiskeys brought to the wedding obviously are idiosyncratic. I have not encountered them elsewhere at any rate. The happy ending is also not very common.

## The Frog and the Mouse



Once there was a mouse who lived on the hill, unh, hunh.  
 Once there was a mouse who lived on the hill,  
 Rougher and tougher than Buffalo Bill, unh, hunh.

One day he said, "I'll go for a ride, unh, hunh."  
 One day he said, "I'll go for a ride,  
 With two forty-fives right by my side, unh, hunh."

He rode up to Miss Mousie's door  
 And rapped and tapped 'till his foot got sore.

Now he sat Miss Mousie on his knee,  
 Said, "Dig, Honey, will you marry me?"

Miss Mousie said, "No, I can't do that,  
 You'll have to ask my brother, Rat.

Now Brother Rat was going to town,  
 To steal Miss Mouse a wedding gown.

Now at the wedding there was all the chicks.  
 Now at the wedding there was all the chicks.

Now at the wedding was Mr. Grin,  
Who brought himself a pint of gin.

Now at the wedding was Mr. Glum,  
Who brought himself a pint of rum.

Now at the wedding was Mr. Fine,  
Who brought himself a bottle of wine.

They had some children that looked like rats,  
Some was skinny and some was fat.  
Some was shaped like a baseball bat.

#### IV

This was a popular song some years ago, recorded by Theresa Brewer, but it was reported to me as having been sung by children long before the record was popular. It involves the kind of joke that children love.

#### The Chewing Gum Song



My mother gave me a quarter,  
To buy some water  
I didn't buy some water,  
I bought some chewing gum.  
Chew, chew, chew, chew, chew, chewing gum,  
How I love chewing gum.  
I didn't get the water  
I got some chewing gum.

My mother game me a dollar,  
To buy a collar,

I didn't buy a collar,  
I bought some chewing gum.  
Chew, chew, etc.

My mother gave me a nickel,  
To buy a pickle,  
I didn't buy a pickle.  
I bought some chewing gum.  
Chew, chew, etc. (18)

## V

This is the very old song, often known as "The Old Man's Courtship." For full bibliographical notes, see Belden's headnotes (BSM, 264 and Brown, III, 17). It goes back at least to 1730 when it was first published in London. The courter is, in most instances in this song, an old man. How he came to change from this to a "crazy bald-headed Chinese" is difficult to imagine. One way or another, he is treated in much the same way here as in the older pieces. As it is here, his adventures are ones which obviously are based on the humor of absurd situations in general, rather than the simple absurdity of a bumbling old man coming to court young women, which provides the modus vivendi for the earlier piece. Originally, the song was one of that large class of songs, the old lover turned down (usually in favor of the young).

## That Crazy Bald-headed Chinese



My mother told me to open the door  
For the crazy bald-headed Chinese.  
I opened the door and he fell on the floor.  
That crazy bald-headed Chinese.

My mother told me to feed him some fish.  
I fed him some fish and he ate up the dish.

My mother told me to take him to bed.  
I took him to bed and he chopped off his head.

My mother told me to take him to the bathroom.  
I took him to the bathroom and he peed in the ashes.



My mother told me to take him to church.

I took him to church, and he pulled off his shirt.

My mother told me to take him to dance.

I took him to dance and he pulled down his pants. (21)

### Riddles, Conundrums, Etc.

It is fortunate for the researcher of riddles that Dr. Archer Taylor has done such comprehensive work in this field. In his book, English Riddles from Oral Tradition, he has listed the thousands of "true" riddles and supplied magnificent bibliographical notes with full annotation of both texts in English and foreign analogs.

The few "true" riddles which I have collected (i.e. "questions which suggest an object foreign to the answer and confound the bearer by giving a solution that is both obviously correct and entirely unexpected"), I have arranged by Taylor's classification system and have provided no further notes, for to do so would be superfluous. In the case of the other types of riddles (conundrums, etc.), I have arranged them in line with his ordering scheme used in Brown, I, 285-328.

Surprisingly, I have collected a number of true riddles which are not included in Dr. Taylor's work. Where possible, I have tried to indicate where these would fit into his categories. Some of them, however, have proved a complete impossibility to classify, and I have put them at the end of the true riddle section.

For the most part, none of these riddles was collected without my first asking for them. They seem to be an activity of the past, for

the only ones which I collected from children were conundrums and "moron" jokes. Most of the ones included here then were collected from the older members of the community, reminiscing about the ones they used to fool their children with. As far as I was able to find out, riddling was never a contest for adults, but only tricks to be pulled on children. Furthermore, the number of riddles from general English language sources seems to indicate that the riddle tradition as found among the Negroes goes back to white sources rather than any specific African ones. Herskovits notes, however, that riddling does exist in African societies, so it is not necessarily the practice so much as the riddles themselves that the Negroes have taken from the whites.

## I

## A

## Comparisons to a Living Creature (1-335)

## 1

One thousand eyes but no nose. —A potato or a sponge. Taylor, 11.

## 2

What has four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening? —Man. Taylor, 47.

## 3

What goes up but never comes down? —Smoke. Taylor, 141. (14)

## 4

What go all around the house and only make one track? —The wheelbarrow. Taylor, 174. (17)

## 5

What has many eyes but cannot see? —A potato. Taylor, 277. (not exact)

6

What has ears but cannot hear? --Corn. Taylor, 285. (18)

7

What sit around the house all day and never wash his face or hands?  
--A clock. Taylor, 301. (18)

8

Has eyes and can't see, tongue and can't talk, and a soul that can't  
be saved? --A shoe. Taylor, 312b.

9

What has a thousand eyes but cannot see? --A sifter. Taylor, should  
be around 277. (32)

10

Two big mouths, but cannot talk? --A stove. Taylor, should be around  
288. (18)

B

#### Comparison to an Animal (336-458)

1

What go all around the house and sit under your bed at night? --Your  
shoes. Taylor, 445. (18)

2

Whave a big mouth and a short tail? --A spoon. Taylor, should be  
around 336 ("animal not identified"), or 1414-15. (32)

C

#### Comparison to Several Animals (459-512)

1

Two legs sat on four legs with one leg in his hand. Four legs jumped  
on two legs and snatched one leg from two legs. What was it? --A dog  
stealing a hambone from a man sitting in a chair. Taylor, 461a.

## D

## Comparisons to a Person (513-826)

## 1

A cap on his head, a throne in his throat. You guess this riddle, and I'll give you a goat. --A rose. Taylor, 595 ("various kinds of dress"), or 632-44 (very closely related). (9)

## 2

Little Nancy Eddingcott. Longer she stands, the shorter she got. --A candle. Taylor, 625-31 (fragmentary and corrupt versions). (32)

## 3

What go all around the house and sit in the corner at night? --The broom. Taylor, 695 (not exact). (18)

## 4

Humpty-dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty-dumpty had a great fall. All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty together again. --An egg. Taylor, 738. (18)

## 5

Long, slim black fellow. Pull his cock and hear him bellow. --A gun. Taylor, 755 (not exact). (17)

## E

## Comparisons to Several Persons (827-1035)

(none collected)

## F

## Comparisons to Plants (1036-99)

(none collected)

## G

## Comparisons to Things (1100-1259)

(none collected)

## H.

## Enumerations of Comparisons (1260-1408)

## 1

Round as a biscuit, busy as a bee/Prettiest little thing you ever did see. --A watch. Taylor, 1310a. (19)

## 2

Round as an apple, deep as a cup/The whole Mississippi couldn't fill it up. --A sieve. Taylor, 1315 (not exact, related to 1321 and 1332, as well as 1347). (18)

## I

## Enumerations in Terms of Form or of Form and Function (1409-95)

## 1

What is live on each end and dead in the middle? --A man plowing with a horse. Taylor, 1432. (9)

## 2

What has a thousand holes and holds water? --A sponge. Taylor, 1459-63.

## J

## Enumerations in Terms of Color

## 1

What is black, white, and red (read) all over? --A newspaper. Taylor, 1498a.

## 2

First its green all over, then white all over, then red all over. --A watermelon. Taylor, 1508. (14)

## 3

Black as tar with a hole in the middle. --A phonograph record. Taylor, perhaps 1739-49. (14)

## K

## In Terms of Acts

## 1

One man can take it upstairs, but a thousand can't bring it down. —A needle (they can't all get at it). Taylor, 1662. (14)

## 2

While the old man petted and patted, the old woman took off her clothes and went at it. —A bed. Taylor, 1741. (32)

## 3

It is something under the apron string, has a red little hole, hairs around it slick as a mole. You can pull it, you can stretch it, you can do it no harm. And put something in it as big as your arm. —A muff. Taylor, 1739-49.

## 4

What is the last thing you pick up before you go to bed? —Your feet. Unclassified true riddle. (18)

## 5

I washed my face in water that was neither hot nor cold. I dried my face on a towel that was neither woven nor sewed. —Washed face in watermelon and dried it with corn silk. Unclassified true riddle. (14)

## 6

All around the hairy, in jumps stumpy. —A man with a mustache smoking a cigar. Unclassified true riddle. (18)

## 7

What's hole always have something in it? —A button hole. (17)

## L

## Arithmetical Riddles (Whimsical Questions)

## 1

Eleven pears hanging high. Eleven knights ridin' by. Each took a pear. Still he left ten there. What's his name? —Each. Brown, I, 312.

## 2

As I was going to St. Ives, I met a man with seven wives. Each wife had seven sacks. Each sack had seven cats. Kits, Cats, Sacks, and Wives, how many were going to St. Ives. —One. Brown, I, 313.

## M

## Based on Puns

## 1

As I was crossing London Bridge, I met a man beneath the bridge. I called my sister, Sally. I bared her blame, I called her name five times. What's her name? —I. Brown, I, 323.

## 2

What goes up, but never comes down? —Your age. (See I,A,3, page 198).

## N

## Biblical

## 1

Who lived and died but never was born? —Adam and Eve.

## O

## A Riddle That is No Riddle

## 1

Three men sitting on a bench. One walked away, I ran away, and one sit still. Which would you rather be? —One walked away is a gentleman, one runned away was a rackass; one sit still shit hissself and couldn't get away.

## II

Conundrums

("What," "How," and "Why" Riddles)

1

What falls and don't break? What breaks and don't fall?

Night falls and day breaks.

2

What's the freshest thing in the house?

A chair because it's always showing its legs. (14)

3

What did the big candle say to the little candle?

Are you going out tonight?

4

What did the rig say to the floor?

Stick 'em up, I got you covered. (26) (17)

5

What did the picture say to the wall?

First they framed me, now they are hanging me. (26) (17)

6

What did the salad say to the ice box?

Shut the door, I'm dressing. (26)

7

How many letters in the alphabet?

Twenty-five, 'cause "p" went down the drain. (33)

8

What is the difference between a baby and an airplane?

An airplane goes from city to city, and a baby goes from titty to titty. (26)

9

Why did the moron throw the clock out the window?

To see time fly. (33)



10

Why did the moron carry a bowl to the movies?

He heard there was a new serial. (26)

11

Why did the moron carry a shoe with a hole in it?

He wanted to pray for holy souls. (26)

12

Why did the moron cut the toilet in half?

He heard his half-ass brother-in-law was coming.

13

Why did the moron wear glasses to bed with him?

He wanted to see things well in his dreams.

14

Why did the moron carry a ladder to the bar?

Because he heard drinks were on the house. (17)

15

Why did the little boy cut a hole in the rug?

He wanted to see the floor show. (32)

16

What did the little boy say when he saw the church on fire?

Holy smoke! (33)

17

Why did the little boy throw butter out the window?

He wanted to see a butterfly. (33)

18

Why did the moron take a step-ladder to church?

He heard it was high mass. (17)

19

What did the moron say to the lemon?

You're yellow. (17)

20

Why did the moron take his gun and knife out in the street?

He wanted to shoot down the alley, and cut down the street. (17)

## CHAPTER SIX

### ADOLESCENT LORE

There is no real, hard and fast line between the lore of children and the lore of adolescents. One does not stop playing games all of a sudden, and despite what the Bible says, a child does not in one day decide to lay away his childish toys. But, at some time during adolescence, sexual awareness does seem to descend on the once child, and his world begins to take a new shape, or at least a new metaphor. Suddenly, then, does come both a physiological and a psychological change that causes the individual to reorient his ways.

The problems seem to remain the same, but their manner of expression becomes different. What was only sensed, perhaps tentatively stated by the child in his ways, becomes an overt statement, almost a raison d'etre to the adolescent. This is abundantly evident in viewing the folklore of the Camingerly neighborhood. Where action has been primary in distinguishing the individual, suddenly it becomes secondary to the power of words. The word-bout, the joke-fest, eventually the courting talk, begins to find precedence in their lives, where formerly such matters were relegated to second place. Rhymes and stories, sometimes recited as children are now understood, and thus assume a larger part in their expression.

It is a time of life when language is capable of establishing status. Secret languages spring up, such as the "tut" language, "pig latin," or "jazz talk," and those that can use them and understand them have accomplished something in the eyes of their peers. Their names are transformed. In "tut" talk, for instance, "Roger" becomes Rutohguteerut, for an 'ut' is added after each consonant. "Bobby" becomes Beezobbie in "jazz talk," an 'eez' going after the first consonant of any word, and preceding any word that starts with a vowel.

Cleverness is expected in any verbal endeavor. Rhyming becomes a favorite activity for the brighter ones. All of the girls keep autograph books and get the boys to write their cleverest poems in them and, also, to pin or tape money in the books! This is also the age at which "playing the dozens" begins and becomes a lively preoccupation. And the sessions of jokes and rhymes begin on the streetcorners and steps at night, and with a few years produce not only the shorter rhymes but the toasts. In folklore, as in so many other elements of life, the adolescent declares himself an adult. The same sort of rhymes, stories, toasts are told by both groups, and for this reason no distinction will be made between them in this realm. Suffice it to say that the younger adolescents do not have the control of words that the older ones do, and therefore, do not tell as long or as successful stories, but the germ in subject and technique is there.

For this reason, I have grouped all of the shorter rhymes together, whether they were collected from adolescents or adults. I did this be-

cause I did not see any appreciable difference between the two, in many cases collecting the same piece from both groups. I have, rather, grouped them by function, dividing them into autograph album rhymes, "dozens" rhymes, hand-clapping rhymes. The narratives, the toasts, and the tales are not really separate, but because they create special problems, separate sections have been devoted to them. Except for the hand-clapping rhymes and the autograph album rhymes, most of the following have been gotten from male informants. I did get enough different rhymes from females of the same general type to force me not to make any distinction between the rhymes of the two groups. Though I did encounter three girls who were interested in rhymes of all sorts, I think they were not typical.

### Autograph Album Rhymes

Not all of these rhymes have been encountered in autograph albums, but they are all of the general sort that are. I did not have a chance to look into many of these treasures, so most of these are from oral sources. As the dominant pattern of most of these rhymes is the "Roses are Red" type and the "When you get married" type. I have included in this section all of the rhymes of that type which I collected, although a few of them are bawdy and would never be found in these repositories.

For other references to this kind of rhyme see, Botkin (TAF), 799 (from New Yorker); Brown, I, 179 (N.C.); Fauset, 138 (Nova Scotia); JAF, 47: 339-40 (Ga.); 61:182-193 (Mo.); SFQ, 9:227 (Va); 17:207-11; TFSB, 22:1, 4, 9 (Tenn.); 23:24, 75 (Tenn.); Withers, 161.

A

1

When you get married and have two twins.  
Don't come to my house for safety pins.

2

While you're young and full of hope,  
 Wash you face in Ivory Soap.  
 When you get old and have no hope,  
 Wash you face in any old soap.

3

When you get old and cannot see,  
 Put up your glasses and think of me.

4

When you grow up and boys call you honey.  
 Marry a man with plenty of money.

5

When you get married and live in a hut,  
 Don't forget to kiss my butt.

6

When you get married and get out of shape,  
 I'll buy you a girdle for a dollar ninety-eight.

7

When you get old and live in a stable,  
 Don't sign your check "Clark Gable."

8

Margaret is a friend of mine.  
 She looks just like Frankenstein.  
 When she walks down the street,  
 I can smell her dirty feet.

9

Kiss me beneath the garden gate.  
 Kiss me beneath the rose.  
 But the proper place to kiss me, Margaret,  
 Is right beneath the nose.

10

YYUR  
 YYUB  
 ICUR  
 YY4me

11

2 sweet  
2 be  
 4 gotten

## 12

2 young  
2 drink  
 4 Roses

## 13

Excuse me Moore  
 Please don't get mad.  
 But you look like something  
 The buzzard had.

## 14

This rhyme is, of course, the sort that used to be found in such books. It obviously was written by an older person. These books used to be filled with such homilies.

If a task is once begun,  
 Never leave it 'till its done.  
 Be the labor big or small,  
 Do it well, or not at all.

## B

The "Roses are Red" verses began as the kind of romantic rhymes which also used to fill these autograph albums. The usual form of this is "Roses are red, violets blue/Sugar is sweet and so are you." This rhyme seems to have quite an ancient history, beginning as a Valentine rhyme. The Opies point out that Gammer Gurton's Garland of 1784 has the following: "The rose is red, the violet's blue, the honey's sweet, and so are you. Thou art my love and I am thine; I drew thee on my Valentine: The lot was cast and then I drew, And fortune said it shou'd be you." Rhymes in this mold were certainly not previously unknown among the Negro. Talley has one, as does Elsie Clews Parson from the South Carolina Sea Islands. Hers is of interest: "De rose is re, De viol' is blue, De prink is pretty, And so are you. Jus' as de grass grow 'roun' de stump, I choose you fo' my sugar-lump. You live between de city an' bay, An' I will get marry whenever you say." Modern versions, such as those here, show the rhyme to be fulfilling quite another function today.

Botkin (TAF), 796 (from New Yorker); Halliwell, 313, 321; Hyatt, 652 (Ill.); JAF, 31:98 (Ontario); 31:165 (Ontario); 47:339; 61:191 (Ozarks); 63:339 (Ga.); Johnson (FCSH), 161 (Ga); Morrison; New Yorker, Vol. 8, No. 39, p. 32; Opie (LLS), 48; Opie (ODNR), 375; Parsons (FLSSI), 177 (S.C.); SFQ, 17:208; TFSB, 22:6, 68, 70 (Tenn.); 23:20 (Tenn.); Talley, 128; Thomas, 145; Tidwell, 629; WF, 13:195 (Cal.); Whitney and Bullock, 157-8 (Md.); Withers, 157.

## 1

Roses are red,  
Violets are blue.  
This street is cracked  
And so are you.

## 2

Roses are red,  
Violets are blue.  
Your dog is pretty,  
What happened to you?

## 3

Roses are red,  
Violets are blue.  
Flowers smell sweet,  
Can't say the same for you.

## 4

Roses are red,  
Violets are blue.  
An ass like yours  
Belongs in the zoo.

## 5

Roses are red,  
Violets are blue.  
Your mother is pretty.  
What happened to you?

## 6

Roses are red,  
Violets are blue.  
Your mother is Italian,  
Your father's a Jew.

## 7

Roses are red,  
Violets are blue.  
If I had a dime  
I'd give it to you.

Miscellaneous Rhymes

## A

I don't know where the famed Mrs. Bright lived, and neither did my informants. For some reason, she lives for posterity because of her wonderful food, and nearly everyone who bothers to learn rhymes knows this one.

Let's go around to Mrs. Lindsay Bright's.  
 She's got a large amount of food for a  
     small amount of price.  
 She's got those collard greens,  
 She's got those lima beans,  
 She's got all kinds of beans.  
 She's got the hamhocks cooking with  
     the lima beans.

## B

There are a number of verses which begin with the line "I had a mule," but none of the ones in print resemble the present one in many particulars.

Brown, I, 192 (N.C.); Hyatt, 647 (Ill.); JAF, 26:125 (Miss.); 32, 376 (Fla.); PTFLS, 6:189; Wood (AMG), 75.

I had a mule. One eye was good, one eye was glass.  
 Two white hooves and a star on his ass.  
 His ears flopped over, his ass sucked wind.  
 He was a traveling motherfucker for the shape he was in.

## C

Best time I ever spent in my life,  
 Was in the arms of another man's wife,  
 My mother.

## D

I shot an arrow in the air  
 Where it fell I do not care.  
 I get my arrows wholesale.

## E

The next few rhymes are what are usually called toasts, but which we can't here without causing some confusion. Let us call them "conven-



tional toasts" because they are in the form of the rhymes which are said while drinking to something or someone.

Creighton, 71 (Nova Scotia)

1

Through the lips, past the gums.  
Look out stomach, here she comes.

2

Now here's to the girl from Clucluck Lane.  
The way she fuck, they say it's a god damn shame.  
Now she ain't too slow, and she ain't too fast.  
She got a Studebaker pussy and a Cadillac ass.

3

Here's to it, the birds do it,  
The bees do it and die.  
The dogs do it and get hung to it,  
So why not you and I?  
Here's to youse guys,  
...(couldn't remember line)  
I wish I had to make you, too.  
I'd paint your tits with iodine,  
And on your ass I'd put a sign,  
"Keep off the grass, this ass is mine."

4

Here's to the duck that swam the lake,  
That started the hen aclucking.  
Damn the bee that stung Adam,  
And started men afucking.

5

The bees up in the sky.  
The butterfly.  
The ruby may kiss the glass.  
But you my friend may kiss my ass.

6

See the conclusion of "The Big Man" toast for a similar curse.

May your bleeding heart torture you.  
May corns grow on your feet  
May crabs as big as roaches  
Crawl around your hole and eat.  
If your hole turn against you  
Until you turn a wreck,

May you fall through you own asshole,  
And break your fucking ass.

F

1

This is perhaps the most common of the "repulsive" humorous rhymes. I have encountered similar rhymes in Texas, and learned on in Philadelphia as a youth.

This is about a girl named Mag, the dirty bitch.  
She's now suffering from the seven-year itch.  
Syphilis running from her nose.  
Green flies eating up her motherfucking ass-hole.  
Now before I dive between them dirty thighs,  
And put my mouth on them dirty tits,  
I'll drink two tons of bucket puke.  
And eat a ton of nigger shit.

2

Tarzan and Bumba was in the tree.  
Tarzan told Cheetah his dick slipped and pissed on me.

3

As I was standing under a tree,  
An ugly little monkey tried to shit on me.  
Now he was slick, but I was smart.  
I knew he was going to shit, 'cause I heard him fart.

4

Here I sit in a solemn bliss,  
Listening to the trickle of piss.  
Now and then a fart is heard,  
All of a sudden a big fat terd

5

This rhyme is obviously a parody on the heroic poem a la Robert Service and "The Face on the Barroom Floor." It is in that very distinct meter and rhyme scheme, and borrows much from the diction of this type piece. It is, in fact, one of a series of such rhymes which began in the same way. I have a number of them collected from white informants in Philadelphia. In my youth we said the similar, "In days of old, when kights were bold, and ladies weren't particular/They lined them up against the wall and screwed them perpendicular."

In days of old, when knights were bold,  
And toilets weren't invented.  
You layed your load upon the road,  
And walked away contented.

## 6

Down by the river where nobody goes,  
 There stands a woman without any clothes.  
 Along came a bull, he was swinging a chain.  
 Down went the zipper and out it came.  
 Three months later all is well.  
 Six months later it begin to swell.  
 Nine months later here they come.  
 Ten little bullies swinging a chum.

## 7

The hero of this boast is a noted Japanese movie monster.

My name is Godzilla  
 My dick is a killer,  
 My balls weight 44 pounds.  
 If you see a lady  
 That wants a baby,  
 Just tell her Godzilla's in town.

## 8

See "Oh Vee, Cha Cha," page 240.

Wild Bill Hickok's a peaceable man.  
 He shit out the window on a bald-headed man.  
 Come downstairs with his dick in his hand.  
 'Scuse motherfucker, but I'm a bad peaceable man.

## 9

Abraham Lincoln was a peaceable man.  
 Walked down the street with his dick in his hand.  
 He pissed out the window on a bald-headed man.  
 He said, "Listen, I'm a peaceable man."  
 "Abraham Lincoln, I'ma black your eye."  
 Abraham Lincoln said, "You're a god-damn lie."

## 10

Fauset, 133-4 (Nova Scotia), c.f. "The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe."

I went upstairs to go to bed.  
 I fell in the pisspot on my head.  
 I could not swim and I could not float.  
 But a big rusty terd went down my throat.

## 11

Fauset, 133 (Nova Scotia)

I went upstairs to get some cider.  
 I saw some jitterbug fucking a spider.

I hit the jitterbug across the ass.  
I never seen a jitterbug fuck a spider.

## 12

When God made men, he made him big and stout.  
He used a string of thread, but he left something hanging out.

## 13

See jump-rope rhyme, page 113.

What's the matter, baby?  
A bee stung me.  
Where'd he sting you, baby?  
On my knee.  
Whyn't you catch him, baby?  
He ran too fast.  
Where'd he run, baby?  
Up my big, fat ass.

## 14

This is but the fragment of the interlocking song built on the pattern of "Sweet Violets." The last part is a parody of the common rhyme about Tim learning how to swim and dying with a bubble in his throat. See, for instance, Withers, 30.

Ikey and Mikey were playing in the ditch.  
Ikey called Mikey a dirty son-of-a-bitch.  
Bring down your children and let 'em play with sticks.  
When they get older they'll learn to play with dicks.  
Dickey had a little lamb, his name was Tiny Tim.  
He put them in the peepot to learn him how to swim,  
He swam to the bottom, he swam to the top.  
When he got up he pulled his mother's cock.

## 15

For the adventures of Jodie, see "Jodie the Grinder," page 336. This certainly comes from the marching song, sometimes called "Sound Off," sometimes called "Jodie's Song."

Jodie asked for a three-day pass.  
Captain told him to wash those dishes and kiss his ass.

## 17

TFSB, 21:102; Wood (FAFR), 14, contains similar rhymes. Another form is found in "Hambone," page 242.

A bluebird flew in the grocery store,  
And he lit on the counter and he shit on the floor.

And he wiped his ass with a tomato can,  
And told the grocer, "I don't give a damn."

## 18

A bullfrog sat on a mantlepiece,  
Backed his ass in a pan of red-hot grease.  
Said, "Look out girls and let me pass,  
For here I come with a French-fried ass."

## 19

There was a woman from Baltimore.  
She had big long titties that touched the floor.  
She had hair on her cock that rolled 'cross the floor.  
God damn that woman from Baltimore.

## 20

See the song, "Railroad Bill," especially in Talley, 94. Actually this is probably a rhyme wholly separate from that song tradition, only associated with it because the song borrowed this verse. It is really not completely in tune with the rest of the "Railroad Bill" verses. See also Opie (ILS), 21.

There was an old man, his name was Bill.  
He lived on a hill.  
He never worked and he never will.  
He drank his booze and then he died.  
Now it wasn't booze that killed poor Bill.  
Now it wasn't wine that took his breath.  
But a fly, a little teeny fly,  
Crawled up his asshole and tickled that motherfucker to death.

## 21

Sat down last night, was too tired to wake.  
Had a chill this morning, was too tired to shake.  
I'm tired of whiskey, tired of gin.  
Had a damn good poker hand, was too tired to win.  
Tired of coffee, tired of tea.  
The one I love is tired of me.  
Tired of prosperity, tired of luck.  
Got the best of pussy, but too tired to fuck.  
Ate beans last night, got gas around my heart.  
But damn it all, I'm too tired to fart.  
I'm too tired to walk, too tired to run.  
Got my ass in the groom, but I'm too tired to come.

## 22

When I was young and in my prime  
I could get a hard-one any old time.  
But now I'm old and my thing is old.  
I can't get a hard-one to save my soul.

## 23

The rhyme form beginning, "When I die," is one which seems to have been popular in the South. Of the following five rhymes that begin this way, only one of them was collected from a young man raised in Philadelphia. Many such rhymes have been observed. Opie (LLS) refers to a popular song, "When I die, don't bury me at all/Just pickle my bones in alcohol." This may be the ancestor of these rhymes, and these may then be nothing but parodies. I think the tradition is more complicated than that, however, for the concluding verse of "The Rake and Rambling Boy" (Laws, L 12) often runs with verses, "When I am dead, laid in my grave," itself related to the rhyme, "When I am dead, laid in my grave/No more good times will I have," etc., which is a drinking rhyme carrying the carpe diem theme, is in the same tradition, and seems to be quite old. See also Kennedy (Mellows), 132; Parsons (FLSSI), 176; White 368-9. Also Creighton, 71 (Nova Scotia). The recent popular folksong, "Freight Train," has similar verses.

## a

When I die, bury me deep,  
Put two women at my feet.  
Put one's cock in my hand,  
So I can feel my way to the promised land.

## b

When I die just bury me deep.  
Right in the middle of Kater Street.  
Fold my arms across my chest,  
And tell all those whores that old Bill's at rest.

## c

When I die just bury me deep,  
With a jug of molasses at my feet,  
A hunk of shortbread in my hand,  
So I can sop my way to the promised land.

## d

When I die don't bury me at all.  
Just pickle my balls in alcohol.  
Cross my hands across my breast,  
And tell all the girls I'm going to rest.

## e

When I die, am lowered to the ground,  
Tell the undertaker to put me faced down.  
Cross my spine, paint a sign.  
Pon my shoulder lay a glass,  
So the whole world'll know to kiss my ass.

## G

The following is a "routine" that doesn't fit into any section really. As it is in rhyme I have included it here. It is of the sort that one does not usually find among the Negro today, it being very self-degrading and "Uncle Tomish." I feel strongly that it has minstrel show antecedents, but have not encountered it in my readings.

When the man was giving out looks,  
I thought he said "books" and I ran for cover.

When the man was giving out brains,  
I thought he said "plains" and I took off.

When the man was giving out noses,  
I thought he said "roses" and I ordered a big, red one.

When the man was giving out legs,  
I thought he said "kegs" and I asked for two fat ones.

When the man was giving out feet,  
I thought he said "meat" and I asked for two lean ones.

When the man was giving out lips,  
I thought he said "hips" and I asked for two fat ones.

When the man was giving out meat,  
I thought he said "heat" and I turned on the air-conditioner.

Oh, God, ain't I a mess.

### Playing the Dozens

Around the ages of ten or eleven, the tenor of the verbal by-play among the boys changes pronouncedly into a form which is variously called "playing the dozens" or simply "playing" or "sounding" (the last being the most common today). This is a direct descendant of the insult contest to be found in many early societies as a basic expression of the contest element in culture, or agon.

The nobleman demonstrates his "virtue" by feats of strength, skill, courage, wit, wisdom, wealth, or liberality. For want of these he may yet excel in a contest of words, that is to say, he may either himself praise the virtues in which he wishes to excel his rivals, or have them praised for him by a poet or a herald. This boosting of one's own virtue as a form of contest slips over quite naturally into contumely of one's adversary, and this in its turn becomes a contest in its own right. It is remarkable how large a place these bragging and scoffing matches occupy in the most diverse civilizations.<sup>1</sup>

We know this type of contest by its outgrowths, flyting, court satire, and social satire in general.

It is obvious that this expression is basically sexual, men using such contests to parade their masculinity.

It is perfectly natural that with many peoples the word for virtue derives from the idea of manliness or "virility," as for instance virtus which retained its meaning, "courage," for a very long time....And this virile ideal of virtue will always be bound up with the conviction that honour, to be valid, must be publicly acknowledged and forcibly maintained if need be.<sup>2</sup>

It is natural then that boys who are just beginning to get a glimpse of their state of manhood should experiment with it by such contest. It is the sort of game which is played by youths in every group that I have been associated with, and my recent queries of Mexicans, Arabs, and people from a number of European countries confirms my thoughts. The major difference is in the overt sexual nature of "sounding" and in the ferocity with which it is played well beyond the usual age when such devices are eschewed.

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<sup>1</sup> Huizinga, Johan, Homo Ludens, A Study of the Play Element in Culture, Boston, 1950, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 64.



"Playing" occurs only in crowds of boys; one will insult a member of another's family. Others in the group will make disapproving sounds to spur on the coming exchange. The one who has been insulted will feel at this point that he must come back in a way that he will make such a clever slur on someone in the protagonist's family that his honor (and therefore that of his family) has been defended. This, of course, leads the other (once again, due more to pressure from the crowd than actual insult) to make further jabs. This can proceed until everyone is bored of the whole affair, until someone hits the other (fairly rare), or until some other subject comes up that interrupts the whole proceedings (the usual state of affairs).

When the combatants are quite young; in effect, they are just try-out some of the words that they are just beginning to understand. Thus, one of their contests is liable to be short, sweet, and very unheated and uncomplicated, but the pattern is established.

"I hear your mother plays third base for the Phillies."

"Your mother is a bricklayer, and stronger than your father."

"Your mother eats shit."

"Your mother eats shit and mustard."

As sexual awareness grows, so the contest becomes more heated and the insults more noteworthy. Many of them take the form of rhymes or puns, signaling the beginning of the bloom of verbal dexterity which comes to fruit later in the "toast," and indicating the necessity of applying strict formal structure to highly volatile matters. A sample of a fracas involving two fourteen- or fifteen-year-olds might run as

follows: Someone would mention the name of someone else's mother in the course of a joking conversation, "Constance" for instance. At this point someone in the crowd says, "Yeah, Constance was real good to me last Thursday." Then Constance's son would have to reply in kind: "I heard Virginia (the other's mother) lost her titty in a poker game." "Least my mother ain't no cake, everybody get a piece." To which the other might reply:

I hate to talk about your mother,  
 She's a good old soul.  
 She's got a ten-ton pussy  
 And a rubber ass-hole.  
 She got hair on her pussy  
 That sweep the floor.  
 She got knobs on her titties  
 That open the door.

And this is turn to elicit any of the numerous retorts which are listed here in the following pages.

Somewhere between the ages of 16 and 26 the boys begin to stop "playing." When somebody indicates that they want to start, the one who is supposed to be insulted may reply, "Oh, man, don't play with me." If he needs a more clever retort, he may rely on the proverb, "I laugh, joke, and smoke, but I don't play." Yet the game is never really forgotten, and anytime within the period in which the boys are still running in groups of their own sex, if an argument arises, it can be complicated and enlivened by some fleeting derogatory reference to a member of the other's family.

Though one may occasionally encounter a female making "dozens" type remarks, it is extremely seldom that one hears prolonged harangues of this sort among girls. Younger boys may show off by "playing" in front of the girls, but as soon as dating starts this is severely frowned upon.

The subjects of these rhymes of ridicule concern for the most part sexual taboos, although cleanliness and defecatory malfunctions are also often mentioned. For the most part, the mothers are insulted in such a way that she appears sexually wanton. Other such intimate subjects mentioned are the various unnatural sex acts that mother, father, or brother are inferred to have committed.

Certainly, these rhymes serve as a clever expression of the growing awareness of the performers, especially of knowledge of sexuality. They also serve as a release mechanism for many of the frustrations and emotions which the teenage boy feels but really cannot express because of the taboos and other social inhibitors. After all, this is a group in which the mother figures very strongly in the lives of the boys, and at the same time are sexually promiscuous and have been so observed by their children. As John Dollard points out, "sounding" is guided by rules which permit and govern the emotional expression of those performing. It is a voicing of themes which are otherwise prohibited in other contexts. Thus, he feels that they are an expression of subjects otherwise completely inhibited, and, further, that the fact that youths put them into rhyme form constructs a further facade for the expression of these emotions.

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<sup>3</sup> Dollard, John, American Imago, Vol. I, p.

It is difficult to determine exactly how widespread this practice is, and how long it has been going on. Those who have commented upon the subject seem to assume that it is widespread throughout the United States among Negroes. I have encountered it in Texas and North Carolina and have been assured by Negro informants that it is found everywhere in this country. It is a widespread practice among adults in the Army and in the prisons, but in these places the contest that it involves can become deadly. It is evidently the source of many deaths in prison fights.

The problems with determining the date of the commencement of this game exists because of a lack of documentation. We know that such a practice existed in parts of Africa, and so may be a vestige of life there. Puckett<sup>4</sup> quoting Kingsley says, "The dominant affection in the home is the intense devotion of the African for his mother, more fights being occasioned among boys by hearing something said in disparagement of their mothers than by all other causes put together." Paul Oliver says, "'Putting in the Dozens' developed as a folk game in the late nineteenth century,"<sup>5</sup> but he gives no documentation. He says, very interestingly, that the game developed out of a contest of real enmities, with an offended man "putting his foot up" (jamming the door of his cabin with his foot) and singing a blues that "put the Dozens" at the expense of his enemy, "calling out his name." This process obviously originated with some magical significance associated with the calling out of the

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<sup>4</sup>Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro, Chapel Hill, 1926, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup>Oliver, Paul, Blues Fell This Morning, London, 1960, p. 128.

other's name, thus attaining some control over him. Thus, "putting someone in the dozens" may originally have meant betwitching him in some way. This aspect of the game is lost today.

The first mention of the practice that I have been able to observe is a popular 'race' record of "The Dirty Dozens" by a singer--piano player named "Speckled Red," recorded in 1929 and 1930.

I like your mama, I like your sister too,  
I did like your daddy, but your daddy wouldn't do.  
I met your daddy on the corner the other day,  
You know about that he was funny that way.  
So he's a funny mistreater, a robber and a cheater,  
Slip you in the 'Dozens,' your pappy is your cousin,  
And your mamma do she Lordy Lord....<sup>6</sup>

It is clear that the early forms of the contest were sung. Both Oliver and Melville Herskovits only seem to know it in this form.<sup>7</sup>

1

I fucked your mother in a horse and wagon,  
She said, 'Scuse me, Mister, my pussy's draggin'."

2

I fucked your mother between two cans.  
Up jumped a baby and hollared, "Superman."

3

I fucked your mother between two tracks.  
It stung so hard, the train fell back.

4

I fucked your mother on top of the moon.  
She shit all over Daniel Boone.

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<sup>6</sup>Quoted, Oliver, op. cit., p. 128. Brunswick, Matrices M 187, C 5584-1/2, reissued, on "Boogie Woogie Piano," Brunswick LP, BL 58018 (MG 1706).

<sup>7</sup>Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend, New York, 1949, "dozens," p. 322. Herskovits, as well as Oliver, op. cit., relates the "dozens" to the tradition among the Negroes of "songs of allusion," or masked protest, but this element seems to have been lost in the practice today.

5

I fucked your mother in a bowl of rice.  
Two children jumped out shootin' dice.  
One shot seven and one shot eleven.  
God damn, them children ain't goin' to Heaven.

6

I fucked your mother in a car.  
She hit me in the eye with a fucking bar.

7

I fucked your mother between two cars.  
Out popped a baby shouting "Vanguard."

8

I fucked your mother on an electric wire.  
I made her pussy rise higher and higher.

9

I fucked your mother between two sticks.  
Out jumped a baby named Tom Mix.

10

I fucked your mother on City Hall.  
William Penn said, "Don't take it all."

11

I fucked your mother on a ten-ton truck.  
She said, "God damn, baby, you sure can fuck."

12

I fucked your mother in a bowl of piss,  
She said, "Hold it, baby, I got to shit."  
I said, "Shit on, baby, while I fuck you down,"  
She said, "But, baby, it's supposed to be black, not brown."

13

I fucked your mother from day to day.  
 Out came a baby and what did it say?  
 He say, "Lookahere, Pop, you grind so fine.  
 Please give me some of that fucking wine."

14

I fucked your mother from hill to hill.  
 Up popped a baby named Mr. Sill.

15

I fucked your mother from booty to booty.  
 Out came a baby called Mr. Sanooty.

16

I fucked your mother from house to house.  
 Out came a baby named Minnie Mouse.

17

I saw your mother last night.  
 She was an awful old soul.  
 I stuck my dick in her hole.  
 She said gimme some more.

18

Your mother chased me, I chased your mother on a sycamore tree.  
 The tree split, she shit, all I got was a little bit. (3) (17)

19

See Adolescent Lore, page 209, for discussion of this form.

Roses are Red,  
 Violets are blue.  
 I fucked your Mama,  
 And now it's for you. (26)

## 20

Is-a-twice sat on a rock.  
 Is-a-twice let the boys feel cock.  
 Is-a-twice, don't be ashamed.  
 Is-a-twice, 'cause your mother did the same.

## 21

Yes, your mother's of the neighborhood.  
 She's got a rutabaga (Studebaker?) pussy, turned-up ass,  
 She can wiggle, she can woggle,  
 She can do it so good,  
 She got the best old hole in the neighborhood.  
 Some people calls it the G.I. jam.  
 A stingin' motherfucker, but good god damn. (26)

## 22

I saw your mother flying through the air.  
 I hit her in the ass with a rotten pear. (26)

## 23

I saw your mother down by the river.  
 I hit her in the ass with two pounds of liver. (26)

## 24

Fee, Fie, Fo, Fum.  
 Your mother's a bum. (26)

## 25

Ring-a-ling-a ting ting tong.  
 Your mother's related to old King King. (26)

## 26

Don't talk about my mother 'cause you'll make me mad.  
 Don't forget how many your mother had.  
 She didn't have one, she didn't have two,  
 She had eighty motherfuckers look just like you. (26)



27

I can tell by your toes  
Your mother wear brogues.

(26)

28

I hate to talk about your mother,  
She's a good old soul.  
She got a ten-ton pussy  
And a rubber ass-hole.  
She got hairs on her pussy  
That sweep the floor.  
She got knobs on her titties  
That open the door.

29

I can tell by your toes  
Your mother drink Tiger Rose.

30

I can tell by your knees  
Your mother eats surplus cheese.

31

I can tell by your knees  
Your mother climbs trees.

32

I heard  
Your mother drink Thunderbird.

33

I saw your mother last night.  
She was a hell of a sight.  
I threw her in the grass.  
I stuck my dick in her ass.  
I said, "Ooh bop-a-doo."  
And then she said, "How do you do?"

### Dozens Replies

At least my mother ain't no rope fighter.

At least my mother don't work in a coal yard.

At least my mother ain't no cake, everybody get a piece.

(The word "cake, meaning any potential female sexual partner, has come from this saying, and has found wide acceptance in jazz circles.)

At least my mother ain't no doorknob, everybody gets a turn.

Least my father ain't tall as a pine tree, black as coal.  
Talk more shit than the radio.

Least my mother ain't no railroad track, lay all around the country.

At least when my mom fuck around,  
she don't use no Royal Crown. (hair dressing oil)

Least my father ain't pregnant in the stomach.

Least my father ain't pregnant in the nose, expecting boogies.

Least my brother ain't no store, he takes meat in the back.

Least my brother ain't no store, stand on the counter tempting everybody.

Your mother lost her titty in a poker game.

### Hand-clapping Games

Hand-clapping is done to practically any song, from the latest rock-and-roll hit to "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." It is a favorite activity whenever two or twenty girls get together. The most amusing thing about it is that the older girls, when they play, will be enjoy-

ing themselves very much, but their faces have a bored look, and they do not look at each other, but into space.

There are a variety of clapping patterns. For songs in  $3/4$  time the following succession of claps is used by two people:

- 1 - right palm down, left palm up, hit each other's opposite hands (i.e. left hits right).
- 2 - both hands forward, up.
- 3 - together, individually.

For  $2/4$  songs, the following is sometimes used by two players:

- 1 - right hands up.
- 2 - together, individually.
- 3 - left hands, up.
- 4 - together, individually.
- 5 - shoulders, cross-handed, individually.
- 6 - knees, individually.
- 7 - together, individually.
- 8 - rest.

There were a number of other configurations of this general sort, but I was unable to note all of them.

Perhaps the most common hand-clapping game is played in a ring. In this, each person hits one hand of the persons to either side, and then claps their own together, once or twice, depending on whether the song or game is in  $2/4$ ,  $3/4$ , or  $4/4$  time.

It is difficult to determine whether this activity is Negro in origin. An article in WF, 7:52-3, indicates that such activities exist among groups of white children. It seems to me, however, that the Negro concern with rhythm and variation predominates here.

## I

This is a version of the old game, "Who Stole the Cardinal's Hat?" Schwartz (Folkways, 7003) has a recorded version in the same form.

For the game in its older forms see: Beckwith, 13 (Jamaica); Billson, 62; Boyd, 95; Cary, 29-30; Daiken, 87 (from Carleton); Douglas, 83 (London); Gomme, I, 301; Gomme, II, 79; MacLagan, 115 (Argyleshire); Mason and Mitchell (Social Games); Newell, 145-6; Ross, 21; Smith, 67; Strutt, 313.

(Everyone has a number, and all in a line.)

Who stole the cookie from the cookie jar?

Not me stole the cookie from the cookie jar. (says number one)

Then who stole the cookie from the cookie jar?

Maybe number two stole the cookie from the cookie jar?

(number two says) Who me stole the cookie from the cookie jar?

(number one says) Yes, you stole the cookie from the cookie jar.

(number two says) Not me stole the cookie from the cookie jar.

Number three stole the cookie from the cookie jar.

(number three says) Who me stole the cookie from the cookie jar?

etc.

(Keeps on until someone misses the beat or correct order.)

## II

This is also a version of "Who Stole the Cardinal's Hat," but quite removed from the first. The person referred to in the opening lines is a local Negro disc-jockey who often begins his show (over WHAT) in the manners of A and B, and proceeds to rhyme all of the introductions to the records.

The expression, "When you up, you up," etc. may derive from the old game often known as "King William." See the versions of this game in Brown I, 197 (N.C.) and Gomme, I, 121, among others.

This game is played in ring form.

## A

Hello, hello,  
Back with this show,  
This is your engineer  
Jocko.  
Back on the scene  
With the record machine

Saying, "Ooh pops, adoo  
 How do you do?"  
 This is your engineer Jocko.

## B

Bee, be-bop  
 This is your jock  
 Back on the scene  
 With a record machine.  
 Saying "hoo-poopsie-doo  
 How do you do?"  
 When you up, you up  
 When you down, you down  
 When you messing with Jock  
 You upside down.  
 You know my scream  
 Those good old collard greens.  
 Jocko calls on number one  
 (next person) Who me?  
 Yes, you.  
 Not me.  
 Then who?  
 Number five.  
 (etc.)

## C

Jocko came from overseas  
 He don't dig no girls in dungarees  
 Call single number one  
 Told a lie,  
 Sapphire  
 Pickpocket.  
 Black frying pan.  
 Number two  
 Who me?  
 (etc.)

## D

Jocko came from overseas  
 He don't dig those chicks in dungarees  
 When you up, you up,  
 And when you down, you down  
 When you mess with Jock  
 You on the ground.  
 You know my screams  
 Those good old collard greens  
 Yea, yea, yea.  
 Jocko used to suck his thumb  
 Tie his shoes

Climb the trees  
 Now he calls zing zing  
 Number three.  
 Who me?  
 Told a lie  
 Sky high  
 Jack Benny  
 Stole a penny.  
 Milton Berle  
 Stole a pearl.  
 Who me?  
 You, you  
 Not me.  
 Then who?  
 Number two.  
 Who me?  
 Climb a tree.  
 Stole a bee.  
 Then who?  
 Number five  
 Who me?  
 (etc.)

### III

This comedy of errors can be found in similar form in JAF, 60:58.

I went up stairs, stairs, stairs  
 To make my bed, bed, bed.  
 I made a mistake, stake, stake.  
 And bumped my head, head, head.

I came down stairs, stairs, stairs,  
 To cook my food, food, food.  
 I made a mistake, stake, stake  
 And cooked my shoes, shoes, shoes.

I went outside, side, side  
 To hang my clothes, clothes, clothes.  
 I made a mistake, stake, stake  
 And humg my nose, nose, nose.

I went down town, town, town  
 To buy a house, house, house  
 I made a mistake, stake, stake  
 And bought a mouse, mouse, mouse.

## IV

This piece of comic lore has the ring of the vaudeville stage to it, but I have been unable to locate it in print.

(Tune: "Turkey in the Straw")

## A

Oh, I went to Cincinnati, and I walked around the block,  
And I walked right into a bakery shop,  
And I picked up a donut and I wiped off the grease,  
And hand the man a five-cent piece.  
He looked at the nickel and he looked at me,  
And he said, "Kind sir, you can plainly see.  
There's a hole in the nickel, you chan see right through."  
Says I, "There's a hole in the donut, too."  
Bats in the belfry, Bay Rum.  
Hit by an auto, how come?  
How do you feel now, all right.  
Clothes on the wash line, dry out.

## B

I went to Cincinnati and I walked around the block,  
And I walked right into a donut shop.  
I hand the lady a five-cent piece.  
And she said, "This nickel is no good to me,  
There's a hole in the middle and it goes right through."  
Says I, "There's a hole in the donut, too."

## V

This rhyme is found most often as a jump-rope rhyme (see page 105), but the repeating form of this is quite unusual. See WF, 7:52-3 as hand-clapping game.

# I Am a Little Dutch Boy





I am a little Dutch boy  
 As funny as can be,  
 And all the girls around my way  
 Go hippity split for me.  
 My girl-friend's name is Jello  
 She comes from Alabamo,  
 With pickles on her toes  
 And rings around her nose  
 And that's the way my story goes.  
 One day as I was walking  
 I heard her say, "Repeat."  
 I am a funny little Dutch boy,  
 (etc.)

## VI

See this as a jump-rope rhyme for other references, page 103.

Oh, Mary Ann, Ann  
 With Silver buttons,  
 All down her back.  
 She asked her mother,  
 For fifteen cents.  
 To watch the elephant  
 Jump the fence.  
 She jumped so high  
 She touched the sky.  
 She never came back  
 'Til the fourth of July  
 When she did,  
 She told a lie.  
 She stoled a pie.  
 Her mother was sick.  
 She called the doctor.  
 Doctor said,  
 She bump her head  
 On a piece of cornbread.



## VII

This piece comes almost intact from a widespread singing game, which is also one which tires to catch the participants in a mistake while spelling the name.

Beckwith, 9 (Jamaica); Brown, I, 155 (N.C.) (3 variants); Burne, 512 (Shropshire); FL, 25:263; FLS, 5:58; Gomme, I, 29, (eight variants, one from Burne); JAF, 33:93; 40:37 (Ohio) (as a counting-out rhyme); JFSS, 5:219; "Palimpsest," 10:60-1 (Iowa) (as a play party); Sharp (FSS), Set I, 14; Whitney and Bullock, 142 (Md.); Withers (COR), n.p. (as counting-out rhyme).

There was a farmer had a dog,  
And Bingo was his name-o.  
B-I-N-G-O, B-I-N-G-O, B-I-N-G-O  
And Bingo was his name-o.

(Repeat, dropping letter each time. Try to catch someone not dropping letter.)

## VIII

The type of ending here (as in IV) is the sort of ending one finds in barbershop singing, usually in the form of the line, "Shave and a haircut, ten cents."

My landlord rang my front doorbell.  
I let it ring for a long, long, long spell  
I went to the window to peep through the blinds.  
I asked my baby what was on his mind.  
He said, "Money, honey."  
"All right, Baby."  
Flies in the gas tank, Bay Rum.  
Who you gonna marry, Buck Jones.  
Clothes on the washline, dried out.

(alternate ending:)

Went to the river, jumped in.  
Sank to the bottom, broke wind.  
Who you gonna marry? Buck Jones.  
What you gonna feed him? Neckbones.  
Who you gonna marry? Tom Mix  
What you gonna feed him? Toothpicks.

## IX

This game has been collected also in New York City (see Folkways, 7003). This is played in the usual 3/4 time pattern by two girls, or in circle form, but where it mentions a member of the body, the hands hit that, and where it mentions a certain action, the hands make an imitation of this action. At the end, all of the movements are gone through in order, three times.

Head, shoulder, baby, 1, 2, 3.

Head, shoulder, baby, 1, 2, 3.

Head, shoulder, baby, 1, 2, 3.

Knee and ankle, baby, 1, 2, 3. (three times)

Rub your tummy, baby, 1, 2, 3. (three times)

Milk the cow, baby, 1, 2, 3. (three times)

Down yonder, baby, 1, 2, 3. (three times)

Around the world, baby, 1, 2, 3. (three times)

Pat your knee, baby, 1, 2, 3. (three times)

## X

This is also found as a jump-rope rhyme, see page 115. It can be done either by two girls in 2/4 time or in ring form. In either case, appropriate actions are used.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Children too.

Two little girls gonna boogie for you.

They're gonna turn all around.

They're gonna touch the ground,

And throw it around from town to town.

And throw that stuff from side to side.

Hands up, toy, toy.

Hands down, toy toy.

(repeat)

## XI

Both versions of this game are played around the ring. "A" is a game played by the five- to eight-year-olds, and they giggle when their name is called. "B" is an elimination game played by the older girls. One person starts the game and she starts the list of foods. The object is for her to get one of the others to say "beans." She says the name of a food and the person to her right has to repeat it in time to the clapping and add the name of another food, and then the person to her





When Buster Brown was one,  
He used to suck his thumb.  
Thumb me over, thumb me over,  
Half-past one.

When Buster Brown was two,  
He learned to tie his shoe.  
Shoe me over, shoe me over,  
Half-past two.

When Buster Brown was three,  
He learned to climb a tree.  
etc.

When Buster Brown was four,  
He couldn't shut the door.  
etc.

When Buster Brown was five,  
He never told a lie.  
etc.

When Buster Brown was six,  
He learned to pick up sticks.  
etc.

When Buster Brown was seven,  
He tried to go to heaven.  
etc.

When Buster Brown was eight,  
He always was late  
etc.

When Buster Brown was nine,  
He never was on time.  
etc.

When Buster Brown was ten,  
He always stole a hen.  
etc.

## B

Daiken, 37, 144; Withers (RIP), 72-3; was recently in the film, "Inn of the Sixth Happiness," and became a very popular song through Mitch Miller's recording.

## This Old Man



This old man, he plays one,  
He plays knick-knack on my thumb.  
With a knick-knack, paddy whack,  
Give a dog a bone,  
This old man came rolling home.

This old man, he plays two,  
He plays knick-knack on my shoe.  
With a knick-knack, paddy whack,  
Give a dog a bone.  
This old man comes rolling home.

This old man, he plays three,  
He plays knick-knack on my knee.  
etc.

This old man, he plays four,  
He plays knick-knack on the floor.  
etc.

This old man, he plays five,  
He plays knick-knack on my spy.  
etc.

This old man, he plays six,  
He plays knick-knack on my sticks.  
etc.

This old man, he plays seven,  
He plays knick-knack up to heaven.  
etc.

This old man, he plays eight,  
He plays knick-knack on the gate.  
etc.

This old man, he plays nine,  
He plays knick-knack on my dime.  
etc.

This old man, he plays ten,  
He plays knick-knack on my hen.  
etc.

### XIII

This is a ring game in which each of the members of the ring must say a rhyme of their own choice, keeping the rhythm of the clapping. These rhymes can come from any place. Some of them printed here can also be found in differing variants in the section on rhymes, and reference in such a case is made at the side of that specific verse. The rhyme beginning "Needles and pins" is of some antiquity and can also be seen in Batkin (TAF), 790 (from JAF, 4:174); JAF, 4:174; 31:98 (Ontario); 63:437 (Mo.); Morrison; Thomas, 75-6 (discusses origin in times of Henry VIII, when he married Katherine Howard and she introduced pins from France and started a fad; Tidwell, 529 (from Morrison); Whitney and Bullock, 159 (Md.). See Lomax (OSC), 72-3, for what seems to be a similar game.

Between each rhyme, the line "O-V, cha cha cha" is repeated.

Amos and Andy was black as tar,  
Tried to get to heaven on a peanut bar.  
The candy bar slipped and down they fell.  
They thought they went to heaven but they went to hell.  
(see page 214)

Wild Bill Hickock was a peaceable man.  
He pissed out the window on a bald-headed man.  
He came downstairs with his dick in his hand,  
He said, "'Scuse me motherfucker, I'm a peaceable man."

Momma upstairs, cooking eggs.  
Poppa downstairs, feeling grandmom's legs.

Mother in the hospital,  
 Father in jail.  
 Sister 'round the corner  
 Yelling, "Pussy for sale."

Needles and pins,  
 Needles and pins,  
 When a man marries  
 His trouble begins.

In jail they give you coffee,  
 In jail they give you tea.  
 In jail they give you everything  
 Except the goddam key.

My mother works in the bakery shop,  
 My father is in the penitentiary,  
 My sister works in the beauty shop,  
 And does it all for me.  
 I wish I had a nickel,  
 I wish I had a dime.  
 I wish I had a lover boy  
 To kiss me all the time.  
 And now I have my nickel,  
 And now I have a dime.  
 And now I have a lover boy  
 To love me all the time.  
 My mother stole my nickel,  
 My father took my dime.  
 My sister took my lover boy  
 And left me here a'crying.

#### XIV

In contrast to the former games, this is always played by boys alone, and has only been included here because it involves hand-clapping and rhythmic accompaniment, much like those of the girls games. It is something like "O-V, Cha Cha Cha," in that rhymes from many different places can be inserted. Basically, this is a rhythmic expression, rather than a game. One line will be droned out; after that the boys will beat a rhythm approximately the same length and with the same configuration of beats. They do this by slapping their legs, hands, arms, and shoulders or shirt tail pulled taut, or the table, or anything handy, just so a variety of timbres is heard. Sometimes after a verse, the boys will begin to improvise on this basic rhythm, adding counter-rhythms to give an almost poly-rhythmic effect. This can last indefinitely, but usually ends with someone yelling, "Hambone." The excitement of the spectacle is much more in the rhythmic play and the variety of timbres than in the words.





Hambone went to the barber shop.  
 Asked the man to shave his cock.  
 The razor slipped, he cut his balls.  
 And Hambone shit in his overalls.

Hambone, Hambone, have you heard?  
 Poppa's gonna buy you a mocking bird.  
 If that mocking bird don't sing,  
 Poppa gonna buy you a diamond ring.  
 If that diamond ring don't shine,  
 Poppa's gonna beat your black behind.

or

Poppa's gonna buy you a bottle of wine.  
 If that bottle of wine gets broke.  
 Poppa's gonna buy you a billy goat.  
 If that billy goat run away,  
 Poppa's gonna buy a stack of hay.  
 If that stack of hay gets wet,  
 Poppa's gonna beat your butt I bet. (26)

## B

Hambone knuckles, peas and rice,  
 Gone to the market, get me a wife,  
 Sooeey girl, sooeey girl.

Hambone, Hambone, where you been?  
 'Round the corner and back again.  
 Hambone, Hambone, what you heard?  
 Poppa's gonna buy you a markin bird.  
 If that markin bird don't shine,  
 My daddy's gonna buy me a bottle of wine.  
 If that bottle of wine gets broke,  
 Poppa's gonna buy me a nanny goat.

Just got back from outer space.

(interjections)

Got a real cool chick.

Hambone walk and Hambone talk.  
 Hambone eat with a knife and fork.

What's the use of turning red.  
 Jody's got her in the bed.  
 What's the use of turning white.  
 Jody had her all last night.

Jaybird flew in the barbershop,  
 Shit on the razor, shit on the strop. (3)

### Parodies

These rhymes do not differ substantially from those in the previous section except that they are simple imitations of previously existing songs and verses.

#### John Henry

When John Henry was a baby,  
You could hold him in the palm of your hand.  
But when he got 19 years old,  
He could stand that pussy like a man.

John Henry told his father,  
A man ain't nothing but a man.  
But before he'd let a piece of pussy go by,  
He'd die with his dick in his hand,  
Yeh, he'd die with his dick in his hand.

Now John Henry took his girl-friend  
He layed her 'pon a rock.  
When he got through he looked at her,  
"Umm, such good cock,  
Umm, such good cock.

Now when John Henry died  
They say he died from shock.  
But if you want to know the truth  
He died from too much cock.  
Yes, the boy died from too much cock.

Now they took John Henry's body,  
And they layed it in the sand.  
People come from far and near  
To see that good fucking man,  
Yeh, to see that good fucking man.

(13)

#### Paul Revere

This parody of Longfellow's poem departs greatly after the opening lines and appears like the fornication contest toasts after that. See "The Fight at O.K. Corral," page 333, and others.

Listen my children and you shall hear  
 Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere.  
 Now Paul was a man who was sturdy and strong,  
 And his dick was nearly two feet long.  
 Believe it or not it hung to his knees  
 And swayed to and fro in the summer breeze.  
 One night while wetting his lips with gin.  
 He found his dick beneath his chin.  
 "Oh, shit," said Paul, as he pushed it down.  
 "It looks like a midnight ride into town."  
 His girl-friend Lil had an express cock,  
 And her hole was as long as a city block.  
 She knew damn well when she looked at Paul  
 That as big as it was, she wanted it all.  
 Now the fucking continued 'til nearly dawn,  
 And Lillian swore her cock was gone.  
 Then Paul climbed off a bit uncertain,  
 And wiped his dick on the parlor curtain.  
 Threw six bits at the lousy whore,  
 Fastened his pants and slammed the door.

### My High Silk Hat

(Tune, "Funiculi, Funicula")

One day as I was riding on a trolley,  
 My high silk hat, my high silk hat.  
 A big fat lady sat upon it,  
 My high silk hat, my high silk hat.  
 Christopher Columbus, what do you think of that.  
 A big fat lady sat upon my hat.  
 My hat she broke,  
 It was no joke,  
 My hat she broke,  
 It was no joke.  
 Christopher Columbus, now what do you think of that...hat.  
 (18)

### I Had a Little Chicken

(Tune, "Turkey in the Straw")

Oh, I had a little chicken, and he wouldn't lay an egg,  
 I rubbed hot water up and down his leg.  
 The little chicken dried and the little chicken said,  
 Doggone chicken laid a hard-boiled egg.

Grace in the kitchen  
 Grace in the hall.  
 Please fat man  
 Don't eat it all. (14)

Now I lay me down to sleep,  
 I pray the Lord my soul to keep.  
 And if I should die before I wake,  
 Put a nickel on 208. (6)

(To "Reveille")

There's a soldier in the grass,  
 With a bullet in his ass.  
 Take it out! Take it out!  
 If you want to be a scout. (26)

(To "The Stars and Stripes Forever")

The monkey wrapped his tail around the flagpole.  
 He caught a bad cold,  
 Right in his ass-hole. (26)

On Top of Old Smokey

On top of Old Smokey  
 Where nobody goes.  
 I saw Betty Grable  
 Without any clothes. (26)

Along came Gene Autry  
 And took off his vest.  
 Then later on  
 He took off the rest. (26)

-

On top of old Rachel  
 All covered with sweat.  
 I've been fucking two hours  
 And haven't come yet. (13)

When You Wore a Tulip

When I wore a tulip, a bright yellow tulip  
 And you wore a bright red rose.  
 First I caressed her,  
 And then I undressed her,  
 What a shape to me she showed.  
 She had boobies like rubies  
 Down where the short hair grows.  
 Her kisses were sweeter,  
 So I took out my peter  
 And whitewashed her red, red rose. (26)

Tararaboomdiay

Boom, boom, boom, boomtiday  
 Did you get your share today?  
 I got mine yesterday  
 From the girl across the way.  
 I gave her fifty cents  
 To lay across the bench.  
 Her mother was surprised  
 To see her stomach rise.  
 Her father was disgusted,  
 To see her cherry busted.  
 Her brother was disgusted,  
 To see her ass all mustard. (26)

Mary Had a Little Lamb

Mary had a little lamb,  
 Feets was black as coal.  
 Everywhere that Mary went  
 That lamb was sure to go.

Mary had to shit one day  
 The lamb was in the path.  
 He said, "Mary, when you get through  
 May I smell your ass?"

Now Mary, she bein' a naughty bitch,  
 She didn't give a damn  
 She tore up her dress and down her drawers  
 She gave a swith and killed that poor little lamb. (13)

Mary had a little sheep  
 Who she called all her very own  
 She took the sheep to bed  
 And carried to her home.

Before the night was over  
 Mary had a lamb  
 Before the night was over  
 She found the sheep was a ram. (13)

Mary had a little lam  
 She loved it very well.  
 She fed him a stick of dynamite  
 And blew him all to pieces. (24)

Mary had a little lamb,  
 His foot was black as soot.  
 And everywhere that Mary went  
 His sooty foot he put.

Mary had a little lamb  
 She thought it was a mutton.  
 And every time it swayed its tail  
 You saw its Joe Brown button. (6)

Mary had a little lamb  
 Fleece was white as snow.  
 She took him by the butcher shop  
 That lamb sure had to go. (17)

### Songs

#### Uncle Bud

This song seems to have had wide currency in the South, though it has seldom been printed. Smith in "Six Negro Songs with Music," in PTFLS 10: 118, mentions, "The nature of this song is such as to prohibit the printing of the six collected stanzas that go with the music." Mack McCormick, in

an article in Caravan, No. 19, p. 17), mentions the song as current in Texas and prints some verses of a local Houston parody with topical significance. See Wheeler, 96, for a riverboat version of the song.



Uncle Bud got corn that's never been shucked,  
 Uncle Bud got gals that's never been fucked.  
 Uncle Bud.

Big cat, little cat, and ten and ninety kittens.  
 Gonna kill all the little cats that don't stop shittin'.  
 Uncle Bud.

Uncle Bud got a gal, her name is May  
 Got hairs on her pussy like an owl's nest.  
 Uncle Bud.

Uncle Bud got a wife, her name is Bess,  
 Got wrinkles on her coodles make a freight train wreck.  
 Uncle Bud.

Now who in the hell in the whole dam nation,  
 Done shit that load on my uncle's plantation?  
 Must have been a woman, couldn't have been a man.  
 Hadda been a man, he'd a bought that land.  
 Uncle Bud.

If you're gonna be a man, be a man in the full,  
 Let your balls hang down like a jersey bull.  
 Uncle Bud.

Little Ball of Yarn

See Brand, 57.



'Twas in the month of June  
 And the flowers were in bloom,  
 And the birds were sweetly singing on the farm.  
 And I met a pretty miss,  
 And I sweetly asked her this,  
 Let me wound up your little ball of yar.

After I got her consent,  
 Down by the garden fence we went.  
 Never dreaming that I did this girl no harm.  
 And I gently laid her down  
 And I rumbled up her gown,  
 Just to wound up her little ball of yarn.

And six days right after this,  
 As I went to take a piss.  
 Never dreaming that I did this girl no harm.  
 And I opened up my flap,  
 And I found I had the clap,  
 Just for wounding up a little ball of yarn.

Nine months right after that,  
 Under a shady tree I sat.  
 Never dreaming that I did this girl no harm.  
 When an officer in blue,  
 Says, "Young man, I'm after you,  
 Your the daddy of a nine pound ball of yarn."

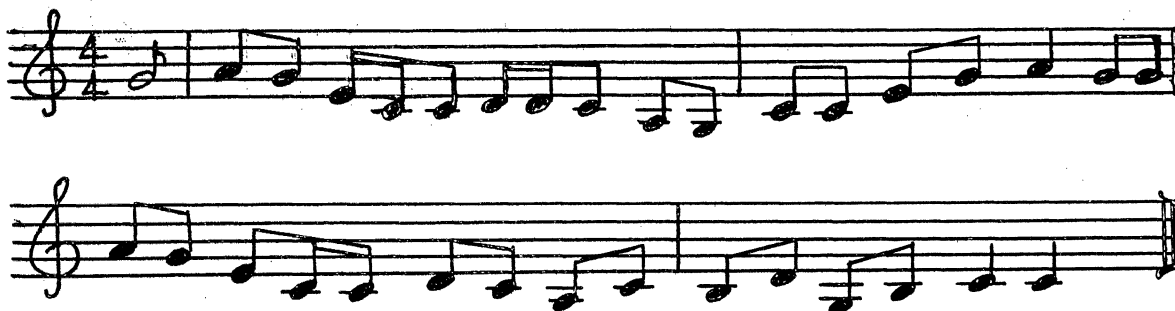
And in a prison cell I sit,  
 With my fingers dipping shit,  
 Just for wounding up a little ball of yarn.  
 And the people as they pass,  
 Throwing peanuts at my ass,  
 Just for wounding up a little ball of yarn. (4)



# The Wayward Boy

(Tune, "The Girl I Left Behind Me")

The first verse indicates some sort of relationship of this song with "Gypsy Davy."



Last night I slept in a sycamore tree  
The wind blowing all around me.  
Tonight I'll sleep in a nice warm bed,  
All the girls beside me.

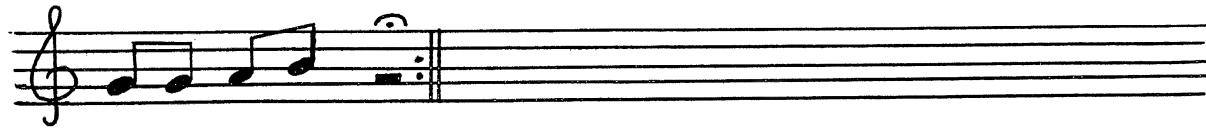
Well, she jumped in bed and covered her head  
And swore I couldn't find her.  
She knew damn well she was lying like hell,  
So I jumped on in behind her.

She rolled her gut against my nut  
And told me not to mind her.  
And like a damn fool, I took my tool,  
And in her sausage grinder.

Nine moths rolled by and I heard a cry  
She cried with pain and horror.  
Three little grunts jumped out of her cunt  
I'm botting ass tomorrow. (13) (16)

# Peter Murphy Had a Dog

This is an interlocking song on the general theme of "Sweet Violets."  
It is obviously imperfectly remembered.



Peter Murphy had a dog,  
 Name was Ringo.  
 Gave it to a lady friend to keep her company.  
 Naughty dog was he.  
 All he did was hunt,  
 Stuck his nose up Mary's clothes,  
 And tried to smell her.

Come away you naughty dog  
 You make my nature rise,  
 There's only one man in this world  
 Can lie between my

Thank you, Mister, for the beer,  
 I need it for my supper.  
 Damn the man that have a wife,  
 And won't stay home to (grunt)

Roll and tumble all night long,  
 Her legs so far apart.  
 When I eat beans  
 You ought to hear me

Haul eight dollars down the line  
 Ten more to ride.  
 Ask your sister, ask your brother,  
 Sitting on the rock,  
 Be the littlest girl in town,  
 She got the biggest

Cock your pistol, Peter Murphy. (13)

### Jailhouse Song

Parody of "The Football Game in Heaven." It is like so many jail songs, such as "Portland Jail" or "Cryderville Jail, in emphasizing the number of bugs.



I was standing on the corner, doin' no harm,  
 Two policemen came past and took me by the arm.

He took me to the jailhouse, I looked upon the wall.  
 The bedbugs and the roaches were having a game of ball.

The score was 19-20, my bread was hard and stale,  
 My coffee taste like tobacco juice, so I knew I was in jail.

The score was 19-20, the roaches was ahead.  
 The bedbugs hit a home run and knocked me out of bed. (26)

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### TOASTS

Set forth here are a number of different narrative rhymes which are usually called "toastes" (two syllables) by those who tell them. The toast may be the most neglected form of traditional narrative; it has been almost totally ignored by folklore scholarship. Indeed, the only publication that I have located that prints any texts of these verses is The Book of Negro Folklore<sup>1</sup> by Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps. Richard Dorson, in his article "Negro Tales" in Western Folklore,<sup>2</sup> mentions that one of the tales printed was "also given... in the form of a rhymed story or 'toast'..." and he prints some tale texts close to toasts. This situation probably exists because the toast, by its very nature (and quite often its subject), calls for the use of what some would call "improper" words.

The toast is a narrative poem which is not sung, but recited, often in a very theatrical manner, and represents the greatest flowering of Negro verbal talent. Quite often the narrative is long, lasting anywhere from two to ten minutes. The form is usually extremely

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<sup>1</sup>The Book of Negro Folklore, Edited by Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, Dodd, Mead, New York, 1958.

<sup>2</sup>Vol. 13, 1954, p. 87.

loose, the only restrictions being that the lines must rhyme in couplets most of the time, with only occasional internal rhymes and triplets. Naturally, as in most folk-narratives of this sort, the rhymes used will often be only near-rhymes.

The lines cannot be measured by counting syllables. It is strictly accentual verse, but the number of accents in any line is never fixed. One line of four stresses may be followed by another of two. A fairly typical couplet has:

Shine went up on deck, said, "Captain, I was downstairs  
eating my peas

Till the water come up to my knees."

a line of five stresses followed by one of three.

There are a number of problems which present themselves immediately when considering the lines from such a point of view. First, the lines are created to be spoken, not written; therefore, they appear differently to the reader than to the hearer, and in this case (as in any oral literature), the way it is heard is the more important. Indeed, the only complete way in which one could fully record the delivery of these poems, would be to indicate in each line where the stresses were given by the performer.

A second problem is that no one specific poem is ever encountered in any set form. This is perhaps due to a propensity of Negro audiences (greater than one usually finds among whites), to value improvisation. These toasts are largely improvisational in character; one informant in discussing this aspect of performance indicated that the most important

talent is the ability to keep the story progressing, and in rhyme, as quickly, fluidly, and dramatically as possible. The finest performers are those who can best improvise on the basic situation. The 'constants' of the narrative are the plot outline (which can be expanded freely) and, to some extent, the rhymes (though even here the performer can feel free to make some changes in these as well). The story is often remembered by means of the rhymes heard. A certain line may be of one length and involve one series of stresses in one rendering, and the next day, the same informant may perform that line in an entirely different way. His changes are usually superficial: different accents or slight changes in word order. The revision may be of a more far-reaching nature by the addition of stock words or phrases, thus changing the pattern of stresses; 'damn,' 'god-damn,' 'fucked-up,' 'bad-ass,' and 'motherfucker' all are commonly added ad lib before a noun to achieve some stress change.

Thus, any recorded toast text just happens to be the one which was told on the day in which it was collected, and it probably would not be reproduced exactly by the same informant again. This amount of variation would especially be true if the social situation of the telling was changed to any great extent (for instance, on the street corner as opposed to sitting around a room speaking into a tape recorder). The toasts which I have obtained have been those which I have managed to get on tape, or which informants have written for me. (I never found one who would dictate a toast.) Often, what I heard in poolhalls or on the street-corner by the same informant was extremely different, both in method of delivery and in finish of the language. I have included,

in some cases, a number of texts of the same toast, many of them very similar to each other, because every one of them represents some capacity of the individual performer to improvise. (Though some of the texts show quite the opposite, a singular lack of improvisation because of an uncreative teller. These are of interest as comparisons for the more creative tellings.

The form of the toast does fit into a general, but by no means binding, pattern. This form is commonly 1) some sort of picturesque or exciting introduction, 2) action alternating with dialogue (because the action is usually between two people or animals), and 3) a twist ending of some sort, either a quip, an ironic comment, or a brag. There is commonly a unity, or a consecutiveness, of action; there is no 'leaping and lingering' as in sung traditional narratives.

There is one element which is found in some traditional ballads which can also be observed in the toasts: incremental repetition. The most elementary form of this can be observed in such a toast as "Squad Twenty-two," where the first lines are:

I ran over to Lombard Street to get my gat.  
I ran back to South Street to put on my hat.

and then later:

Now I run back to South Street to put down my gat,  
And back over to Lombard Street to put down my hat.

It can best be observed in versions of "The Titanic." There the argument between "Shine" and the captain is done incrementally. There are the repeated lines:

Captain, Captain, don't you know,  
 You got three (nine, ninety-nine) holes in your  
 boiler-room floor.

In other versions we find the similar:

Captain, Captain, I was downstairs eating my peas (looking  
 through space, eating my bread),  
 That's when the water come up to my knees (waist, head).

The reply is also incrementally repetitious,

Captain looked at Shine, said, "Shine, Shine, have no fear.  
 Got three (nine, ninety-nine) pumps to keep the water out of  
 here.

Another ballad-like element is the use of cliches and common-places. Time and again the same lines and series of lines creep into different toasts. A gun is never a gun; it is a "fourty-four" or a "forty-five" or a "thirty-eight," depending upon what rhyme is needed. A man is never shot; it is rather described as putting a "rocket through his motherfucking head." In many toasts someone begins to "call the law" and is rewarded by being shot in the "jaw." In many toasts where the hero comes up before a judge and is sentenced, he remarks:

"Fifty-five (or fifteen to thirty) ain't no time"<sup>3</sup>  
 I got a brother in Sing-Sing doing 99.

and in one version of "Stackolee," the similar lines occur:

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<sup>3</sup> This comes from a commonplace from blues verses. See Oliver, Blues Fell This Morning, p. 176. The whole courtroom scene may be a commonplace from early Negro song; see for instance, Wheeler, 111.



"Judge, 99 years ain't no god-damn time.  
My father's in Alcatraz doing 299."

Often the cliches called for are proverbial. Such phrases abound as "like a rat eats cheese," "king of the sea," "off like a PT boat," "faster than a streak of lightning," "more dead than alive," and "like a ten-ton truck." Some of these are culturally significant, such as "spend money just like I was white," and "stay in your class."

Yet, as is readily observable, not all images used are cliches. The language used by the performers in these poems is, as in many public utterances, highly self-conscious and artful. The well-turned phrase is constantly sought after, and he that calls forth the best ones is the best of the toast-tellers. Often, the balanced line is created simply for poetic effect, such as the line from "Stackolee" and one version of "Jesse James":

I walked through water and I waded through mud,

Often the sense of a line is obscured in order to enhance its sound.

Once again, our example comes from "Stackolee."

The bed gave a twist, the springs gave a twistle.  
I threwed nine inches of joint to the whore before  
she could move a gristle.

In the toast of "The Titanic," fact is sacrificed in order to make the opening more euphonious. This tragedy, which actually occurred on the 14th and 15th of April, 1912, begins:

The eighth of May was a hell of a day.  
When the Titanic was sinking away.

or:

It was a hell of a day in the merry month of May  
When the great Titanic was sailing away.

This is by no means great poetry, but the interrelationships of the 'a' sounds and the 'm' sounds in the second are consciously and artistically conceived. Sometimes, these artful effects are used to emphasize a comic point, as in the couplet from the Charley Williams' "Titanic":

Shine said, "You may be king of the ocean, king  
of the sea,  
But you got to be a swimming motherfucker to  
outswim me.

Consistent with this attitude toward sound and sense in words is the emotional content of the poems as a whole. They are created to play on one's emotions, by their sound, by their diction, by their breathtaking pace, and by their subject matter. The emotions which are primarily called into the toasts are humor and amazement; the subject treated, freedom of the body through superhuman feats, and of the spirit through acts which are free of the restrictions of mores of society (or in direct violation of them), especially in respect to crime and violence. The heroes of most of these pieces are 'bad-men,' criminals, men capable of prodigious sexual feats, and very clever men (or animals) who have the amorality of the trickster. The diction of the pieces does everything to heighten the effect of these characters. The iconoclasm of the values involved is strongly echoed in the abundance of strong and obscene words. Such words not only show the teller to be the kind of strong man that the hero of the tale is but also fit the general tone of

the piece. Furthermore, they are very active words that blend very well with the abundance of active verbs and expressions in these pieces.

"Swinging," "running," "stomp," "kill," "knock," "jumped," these are the verbs that predominate in these highly active pieces. In the same way, the proverbs and cliches are usually utilized for the purposes of either furthering the action or the iconoclasm, or both. "Like a bat out of hell," "pick on someone your own size," "clean out of sight," "fight like a natural man," "like a bolt of lightning, a stripe of white heat," "like a ten-ton truck" all behave in this same active way. We have the borrowing of the concreteness of folk-speech, and it is to further the tone and action of the toasts. Because of the confines of the form, the images and diction of these pieces seem even more vivid, more precise, more imaginative than that found in the tales and anecdotes. It borrows, in this sense, more from the economy of the Negro ballad than from the tale. There is much in common in method between the standard Negro ballad stanza:

Send for the yellow tired buggy.  
Send for the yellow seated hack.  
Gonna carry her to graveyard.  
Ain't never coming back. (Found in "Delia Holmes,"

"Frankie and Johnnie," and many others.

and such a couplet as

I was standing on the corner, wasn't even shooting  
crap,  
When a policeman came by, picked me up on a lame rap.

(From "The Great MacDaddy")

especially in regard to economy and artistic embellishment, if only to create a rhyme situation. These have as much a professional tinge as the amateur aura of the usual joke told.

In fact, there is much about the toast as an entertainment form that can be traced, perhaps, to a professional medium, the blackface minstrel stage. It is impossible to say with our present knowledge of early Negro lore whether such entertainments existed before this time and were borrowed by white performers for the minstrel stage, or whether this is an invention borrowed by the Negro and recast. At any rate, we know that in the later history of the 'blackface' show, recitations, often comic ones, became a part of the show. As Carl Wittke, the historian of the minstrel stage says, "Another favorite device of the endmen was to entertain their audiences with the recital of a poem....Frequently the interlocutor would recite a popular favorite correctly, in order to give the endman the opportunity to improve on his rendition by...new versions."<sup>4</sup> Such verse not only found its way into the interplay between the interlocutor and the endman but also the monologist during the olio part of the program was known to break into verse.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the toast could have originated at either position in the minstrel show.

A further influence of the blackface show may be seen in the common characteristics of some of the dialogue. In such toasts as "Stackolee"

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<sup>4</sup>Wittke, Carl, Tambo and Bones, Durham, N. C., 1930, p. 164.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p. 171.

and "The Titanic," there is much dialogue between two characters. Often this approaches the form of the 'straightman' and 'gagman' jokes, or in more appropriate terms, 'Mr. Interlocutor' and 'Mr. Endman.' This is most evident in "The Titanic" where the Captain, his wife and daughter, the shark, and sometimes the whale, serve 'feeder' or 'set-up' lines for "Shine." For instance, in 'Kid's' version (second night):

Shark said "Shine, Shine, can't you see,  
When you jump in these waters you belongs to me."  
Shine said, "I know you outswim the barracuda,  
outsmart every fish in the sea,  
But you gotta be a stroking motherfucker to  
outswim me."

This same element can be seen, to a lesser comic effect in "Stackolee," which in general is more concerned with action than dialogue. After "Stack" has shot the waiter:

Little lady come in and said, "Where's the  
waiter, please?"  
I said, "He laying behind the counter with his  
mind at ease."

This is by no means to say that the minstrel show stands as the origin of the toast. Many cultures have had similar traditional narrative poetry, and some of it similar to some toasts. In this discussion I must, however, limit myself to a discussion of the form and subjects as found among the Negro in South Philadelphia.

There is more than one possibility as to where the term "toast" originated in the sense in which it is used here. It is certain that somehow the present meaning derived in some way from the custom of the dedicatory speech or verse recited and pledged with a drink. We know

that this custom was taken over by the Negro at least as early as the beginning of this century.

Toasts are given at drinking parties; but all through the South they are given at all kinds of gatherings, even at school "jus' fo' pastime."<sup>6</sup>

The sense of the word here indicates that the custom of "toasting" begun at the drinking parties had already expanded. Perhaps it expanded further to include any verse recitations, and from there got particularized into the form as we know it. There did, and does, exist among the Negro the custom of creating occasional poems, and other long verse forms. Fauset<sup>7</sup> quotes one from Southern Negroes, and Dorson from Michigan.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the name "toast" became associated with these longer rhymes.

On the other hand, the name may have been derived from the numerous books containing "After-Dinner Speeches, Jokes and Toasts," which include such recitations as "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" or "The Face on the Bar-room Floor." These books can still be bought at most bookstores. Whenever I have asked any older members of the neighborhood if they knew any toasts, they would say that they used to know them, those toasts about "Stackolee" or "The Face on the Bar-room Floor," and, indeed, I did find one who remembered most of "The Drunkard." Many of them claimed to have books in their homes (which at first I took to

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<sup>6</sup> JAF, 32:375.

<sup>7</sup> Fauset, Folklore of Nova Scotia, p. 100

<sup>8</sup> Dorson (NFIM) pp. 13-14.

mean their own individual collections of toasts), but on investigation they proved to be either bad joke books, or books of these recitations.

The relationship of these rather theatrical narrative poems to the toast can be seen in another way. It is certain that "Paul Revere's Ride" is a parody of the famous Longfellow poem; in the same way all of the fornication contest toasts can be seen to be parodies of the type of verse written by such authors as Robert Service, the author of "The Shooting of Dan McGrew," or, to some extent, even Rudyard Kipling. Such origins are a good deal clearer in collected texts from white informants. (A good example is to be found in Count Vicarion's Book of Bawdy Ballads, Paris, 1956, XIV, "Eskimo Nell.") Closer analysis might show a similar relationship between all of the toasts and the works of popular verse.

Once again, the minstrel show can be seen as at least an intermediary in this process, for the 'endman' and the olio poems were certainly parodies. The toast, then, in some way reflects a background with professional entertainment forebears. It is today, first and foremost, an entertainment. It is a social entity, not to be performed alone in the fields or while washing dishes but on the street corners with the gang on long summer evenings, in the pool-hall after everyone has run out of money, and occasionally at parties. Though for the most part male entertainment, the female members of the neighborhood like to hear them performed, and it is only the matriarchs and the sternly religious who look down upon them. There is a tendency not to offend the female sensitivity by performing them before women, but the women often try to goad the men into performing them. It is a favorite occupation of some young girls to attempt to sneak to a place where, unobserved, they can hear the boys performing these pieces.

Not everyone knows toasts, and not all who know them are encouraged by his peers to perform them. One must have a good sense of timing and a good dramatic delivery to gain the approval of this audience. I have encountered only a few people who told toasts, but those who do usually know quite a few. They usually are performed by young men, age 16 to 30. Among the perhaps two hundred youths in the neighborhood, there are only five or six toast tellers. These are usually the same ones who know the most jokes, stories, anecdotes, and 'sounds' as well.

Indeed, the distinction between jokes and toasts is not a completely clear one among those who perform these pieces. Often, in asking for toasts, I will receive a joke instead. Of the toast tellers in the neighborhood, John H. 'Kid' Mike is regarded as the best because he knows many and can tell them very vividly. He takes great pride in his powers, especially as an ad lib artist, and fancies himself a professional entertainer.

Because the object of the toast teller is primarily to entertain, he often will tell the story in such a way as to make it just a little funnier (by the addition of incongruous or picturesque expressions) or a little more superhuman or explosive. And there is no doubt that the audience is being entertained when one hears a toast performed well. All sorts of vocal appreciation can be noticed at any of the high points of the narrative. The real question involved is whether the audience is believing that such an event actually happened. When confronted with this actual question, most will reply that they are fictions, but perhaps because they don't want to be suspected of not being in tune with the modern world. However, some whom I asked



thought that there were probably men who lived named "Stackolee" and "Billy Lyons," who did the things described in the toast. All asked regarded the toasts about animals as humorous ways of describing people, but none would go as far as saying that the jungle really represented city life.

The element of belief is intricately bound up with the vicarious enjoyment which the members of the audience obviously are exhibiting while hearing these stories. The desire to be sexually superpotent or above the restrictions of (an imposed) society is obviously manifested in the reactions of both the performer and the audience.

These folk-poems are then of great interest to the folklorist, because through them he is able to observe a folk-narrative being created or recreated, and, thus, how form, function, and expression are bound together in a folk-creation. These stories are, in many ways, the construction of the audience, for it is they who give them life and sanction, and they as well as the performer 'live' them. The toasts would never have been created except by the unusual talents of the creators and performer-recreators, but they would never be passed on by tradition without the participation and approbation of the audience. But then, this observation could perhaps be made for any traditional narrative.

The Titanic

All of the versions of "The Titanic" fit into the same general pattern: an introduction about the terrible day on which the ship sank; the introduction of "Shine," the mythical Negro stoker on board the ship; a description of his argument with the captain about whether the ship was sinking; the jumping into the water and his amazing swimming ability described; the captain's offer of money to save him which he refuses (missing in the E text); the offer of the captain's wife and/or daughter of sexual relations with him if he will save them, which he likewise refuses; a conversation with the shark and/or whale where he claims to be able to outswim them (which he apparently does); and a final ironic twist in which it is mentioned that "Shine" swam so fast that by the time that news arrived of the sea tragedy, "Shine" was already inebriated in some specific location.

There is, as far as I have been able to ascertain, only one complete text of this toast which has previously been reported. That is to be found in the Book of Negro Folklore<sup>9</sup> in a text collected by Langston Hughes on Eighth Avenue in Harlem in 1945. As in the "D" text of this collection, a millionaire (in Hughes' case, he is specified as Jay Gould) is added to the dramatis personae. It is he who offers monetary reward, and it is his daughter who offers herself sexually and is

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<sup>9</sup> Hughes and Bontemps, op. cit., p. 366.

rejected. The text, as printed shows strong evidence of being bowdlerized. The common lines

That's when the Captain's daughter came on deck;  
Hands on her pussy, and drawers 'round her neck.

becomes

Jay Could's millionaire daughter came running up  
on deck  
With her suitcase in her hand and her dress  
'round her neck.

The Hughes version lacks the dialogue between the shark and "Shine" and ends in a beautiful piece of modern irony.

When all them white folks went to heaven,  
Shine was in Sugar Ray's Bar drinking Seagram's Seven.

It is impossible to date accurately the composition of this piece. Though there is this one printed text, the very date of the occurrence seems to indicate that it must be over forty-five years old. And, indeed, the story could be older, with a change in the name of the ship to make it more timely.

In Gumbo Ya-Ya<sup>10</sup> the authors report from the singing of one Carolina Slim a song about the Titanic which the singer claims to have written. The stanzas quoted are:

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<sup>10</sup> Gumbo Ya-Ya, A Collection of Louisiana Folktales, compiled by Lyle Saxon, Edward Dreyer, and Robert Tallant, Boston, 1945, pp. 374-5.

I always did hear that the fi<sup>t</sup> of May was a wonderful day  
 You believe me, everybody had somethin' to say,  
 Telephones and telegraphs to all parts of town,  
 That the great Titanic was a'go'in' down.

The captain and the mate was standin' on deck havin' a  
 few words  
 'Fore they know it, the Titanic had done hit a big iceberg.  
 Had a colored guy on there called Shine, who came from  
 below,  
 And hollered, "Water is coming through the fireroom do'."

Shine jumped off that ship and begun to swim,  
 Thousands of white folks watchin' him.  
 Shine say, "Fish in the ocean, and fish in the sea,  
 This is one time you white folks ain't gonna fool me."

This is certainly a not-too-remote ancestor of our toast. From the indications that there were a number of other verses, the authors possibly felt, as Hughes and Bontemps seem to have, that it would be improper to print anything so "raw." As the book is made up of material collected by the WPA, we can at least date the story in the same basic outlines as far back as the 1930's.

There is further secondary material to indicate that the story could be found in somewhat similar form even earlier. This can be deduced from a number of fragments from other sources. Carl Sandburg in The American Songbag prints a Negro song about the Titanic which he claims was sung by American Negro soldiers during World War I. One stanza says:

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<sup>11</sup> Sandburg, Carl, The American Songbag, New York, 1927, p. 254.

Up come Bill from de bottom flo'  
 Said de water wuz runnin' in de boiler do'.  
 Go back, Bill, an' sut yo' mouth  
 Got forty-eight pumps to keep the water out!

In a minstrel song that was very popular throughout the South in the 1920's, we find another momentary glimpse of the toast. In this song, usually called "The Travelling Coon,"<sup>12</sup> the hero is something of a trickster. His exploits seem to be derived from popular tall-tales.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>This song can be found in many collections and on many records with practically identical texts. The books in which I have encountered it are:

Odum, Howard W., Rainbow Round My Shoulder, Indianapolis, 1928, p. 235 (does not have verses quoted).

White, Newman I., American Negro Folksongs, Cambridge, Mass., 1928, p. 350

The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore, Vol. III, The Folksongs, edited by Henry M. Belden and Arthur Palmer Hudson, Durham, 1952, p. 515.

I have also heard it on the following records:

Victor 2095-7-B, as sung by Luke Jordan; as sung by Doc Boggs.

Riverside RLP 657, "Traveling Man," as sung by Billy Faier.

Text on the latter, from Boggs.

<sup>13</sup>The most notable one included in all texts is the one about going to the spring to get water, a hole springing in the bucket, and how the travelling coon ran to the house, got another bucket and caught the water before it hit the ground (for a text of this see page number 375. It is interesting to note the possible derivation of this song from the older song of tall-tales, "The Ram of Derby." The usual chorus to the minstrel song is:

He was a travelling man.  
 He was a travelling man.  
 He was the travellinest man  
 Finest was in the land.  
 He was a travelling man  
 He was known for miles around  
 H'd never give up, no he wouldn't give up  
 Till the police shot him down.

White, op. cit., p. 350, notices that "These lines seem to be based on the chorus of the modern minstrel song, current about 1905 to 1915; "He rambled, he rambled, he rambled all around town/He rambled, he rambled till the butcher cut him down." This "modern minstrel song" must be either the very old song of "The Derby Ram" or a song very close to it, for the chorus quoted is very similar to a common chorus of the older song.

Found among the most common verses are the following:

The coon got on the Titanic  
An' started up the ocean blue,  
But when he saw the iceberg,  
Right overboard he flew.

The white folks standin' on the deck  
Said, "Goon, you are a fool."  
But 'bout three minutes after that  
He was shootin' craps in Liverpool.<sup>14</sup>

The problem presented by this material is whether these fragments are echoes of the toast in an old version, or the toast is made up of fragments derived from these sources. This is, unfortunately, a question unanswerable with the knowledge we are now able to gather.

One thing we do know is that there were a great many songs and ballads in broadsheet form concerning the sinking. The Lomaxes say of the event that it was "the most widely celebrated tragedy of that era, the event which seems to have caught the imagination of the Negro....From the variety of ballads on this subject that have been discovered, we can only suppose that there must have been numerous songs composed and broadcast."<sup>15</sup> It was reported that one week after the event a blind preacher was seen on a train selling a ballad he had composed on the disaster.<sup>16</sup> There are three broadsheets of songs about the sinking in the Frank C. Brown

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<sup>14</sup>White, op. cit., p. 350

<sup>15</sup>Lomax, John A. and Alan, Negro Folk Songs as Sung by Leadbelly, New York, 1936, p. 181

<sup>16</sup>Perkins, A. E. (JAF) Vol. XXXV, p. 223, as quoted in Brown Collection, Vol. II: The Ballads, p. 662.

Collection.<sup>17</sup> Besides these numerous creations, there are also parodies of previously existing songs which talk about the tragedy.

Where was you when the big Titanic  
Went down?  
Where was you when the big Titanic  
Went down?  
Standing on the deck singing  
"Alabama Boun<sup>18</sup>." 18

Most of these songs concerning the Titanic are moralistic in their nature. They say in effect, "See what God can do, even to the rich."

Such common verses as:

When that ship left England it was making for the shore,  
The rich had declared that they would ride with the poor.  
So they put the poor below,  
They were the first to go.<sup>19</sup>

do not necessarily contain any social message; rather, they are carrying the message of a God-fearing people.

Yet the Titanic disaster did evince social commentary in the songs which were written about it, especially in Negro renditions. This may have been because the story was circulated that Jack Johnson, the Negro Heavyweight champion of the world was not allowed on the boat, and thus

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<sup>17</sup> Brown Collection, op. cit., pp. 662-8. "A" text is a parody of "The Golden Vanity."

<sup>18</sup> White, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 347

his life was saved, an irony which appealed to the Negro sense of humor.

Leadbelly, in his song about the disaster says:

Jack Johnson wanted to get on boa'd;  
Captain Smith hollered, "I ain't haulin' no coal."  
Cryin' "Fare thee, Titanic, fare thee well."

and later:

Jack Johnson heard the mighty shock,  
Might'a seen the black rascal doin' th' Eagle Rock.  
Cryin', "Fare the, Titanic, fare thee well."

Black man oughta shout for joy,  
Never lost a girl or either a boy.  
Cryin' "Fare thee, Titanic, fare thee well."<sup>20</sup>

This irony may indeed account for the popularity which the story of the tragedy has had among the Negro.<sup>21</sup>

Yet this irony is only the germ of the one which is exercised in our toast. A great deal of the source of the humor in the piece depends also on the same triumphant psychological fact that the Negro escapes while the whites all drown (with the crowning touch that "Shine" was

<sup>20</sup> Lomax, op. cit., p. 182

<sup>21</sup> There seem to have been a number of white songs on the tragedy, but their currency in tradition is small indeed. See The Brown Collection, op. cit., pp. 663-6; Henry, Mellinger E., Songs Sung in the Southern Appalachians, London, 1933, p. 88; Henry, Mellinger E., Folksongs From the Southern Highlands, N. Y., 1938, pp. 426-7; Gardner, Emelyn Elizabeth and Geraldine Jencks Chickering, Ballads and Songs of Southern Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich., 1939, p. 295. Many of the above are related to the song very popular at campuses and camps, and which may be of Negro origin itself, as many early recordings testify; see Folkways, FP 221, #22, as sung by W.V. Smith.



already home and nearly drunk by the time news had arrived there). Yet this irony is made so much more effective by the fact that before the ship has gone down, Shine has been offered money and sex and refuses them.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the story is heroic in its feeling. Shine shares with mythical heroes the extraordinary powers which he shows through the act of outswimming the shark and the whale. Similarly, the captain (or millionaire) and his wife and daughter present with "Shine" with tasks of a sort; his choice, it must be admitted, is strictly utilitarian. In the figure of "Shine," the young Negro has found a character that exhibits in abundance many of the characteristics highly valued by them, especially in relation to white society and in his feat of swimming. He is more than a mere trickster with anxious repartee.

The "A" text is a most complete one, missing only the encounter with the shark. "B" and "C" are collected from the same informant, but are sufficiently different so that I have included them for comparative purposes on how the same informant may change a toast under different conditions. Text "E" is from an informant who knew no other toasts and who really only knew part of this one, but wanted to record one day. I have included it because it shows some significant variation.

## A

It was a hell of a day in the merry month of May  
 When the great Titanic was sailing away.  
 The captain and his daughter was there too,  
 And old black Shine, he didn't need no crew.

Shine was downstairs eating his peas,  
 When the motherfucking water come up to his knees.  
 He said, "Captain, Captain, I was downstairs  
     eating my peas  
 When the water come up to my knees."  
 He said, "Shine, Shine, set your black ass down.  
 I got ninety-nine pumps to pump the water down."

Shine went downstairs looking through space.  
 That's when the water came up to his waist.  
 He said, "Captain, Captain, I was downstairs  
     looking through space,  
 That's when the water came up to my waist."  
 He said, "Shine, Shine, set your black ass down.  
 I got ninety-nine pumps to pump the water down."

Shine went downstairs, he ate a piece of bread.  
 That's when the water came above his head.  
 He said, "Captain, Captain, I was downstairs  
     eating my bread  
 And the motherfucking water came above my head."  
 He said, "Shine, Shine, set your black ass down.  
 I got ninety-nine pumps to pump the water down."

Shine took off his shirt, took a dive. He took one  
     stroke  
 And the water pushed him like it pushed a motorboat.  
 The Captain said, "Shine, Shine, save poor me.  
 I'll give you more money than any black man see."  
 Shine said, "Money is good on land or sea.  
 Take off your shirt and swim like me."

That's when the Captain's daughter came on deck;  
 Hands on her pussy, and drawers 'round her neck.  
 Says, "Shine, Shine, save poor me.  
 Give you more pussy than any black man see."  
 Shine said, "Pussy ain't nothing but meat on the bone,  
 You may fuck it or suck it or leave it alone.  
 I like cheese but I ain't no rat.  
 I like pussy, but not like that."  
 And Shine swum on.

He said, "I hope you meet up with the whale."  
 Old Shine he swim mighty fine.  
 Shine met up with the whale.  
 The whale said, "Shine, Shine, you swim might fine,  
 But if you miss one stroke, your black ass is mine."  
 Shine said, "You may be king of the ocean, king of  
 the sea,  
 But you got to be a swimming motherfucker to out-  
 swim me."  
 And Shine swim on.

Now when the news got to the port, the great Titanic  
 had sunk,  
 You won't believe this, but old Shine was on the corner,  
 damn near drunk.

(28) 9/20/59

# B

It was back then a long time when the great Titanic  
 was sinking away.  
 Shine, a little man, was off on the port side.  
 He come over and he said, "Captain, Captain, the  
 water's over the first fireroom door."  
 He said, "Shine, Shine," he said, "Have no doubt,  
 For we got forty-nine pumps to pump that old water out."

Shine went down and came up again.  
 He said, "Captain, that damn water's still coming in."  
 Captain said, "Shine, Shine, have no doubt.  
 I told you we got ninety-nine pumps to pump the water  
 out."  
 Shine said, "There was a time, your word might be true,  
 But this is one god damn time your word just won't do."

Shine jumped overboard, throwed two kicks and one stroke,  
 Was off like a motorboat.

Captain came up on deck. He said, "Shine, Shine, save  
 poor me.  
 I'll give you more money than a man want to see."  
 Shine said, "There's money on land, money on sea,  
 But I keep on stroking, that money on land be best  
 for me."

Captain's daughter came up on the deck  
 With her drawers in her hand, brassiere around her neck.  
 She said, "Shine, Shine, save poor me.  
 I'll give you more pregnant pussy that any black man  
 want to see."

Shine said, "You know my color, and you guessed my race.  
 You better come in here and give these sharks a chase."

Shine kept a-swimming. Come past a shark's den.  
 Shark looked at Shine and invited him on in.  
 Shine said, "I heard about you. You the king of the  
 ocean, the king of the sea,  
 But you got to be a stroking motherfucker to outstroke me."

When word got to Washing<sup>g</sup> times the great Titanic was sunk,  
 Shine was on Broadway, one-third drunk.

(13) 4/7/59

# C

## (Second Night's Version)

One day when the great Titanic was sinking away,  
 Captain was in his quarters one lonely night,  
 This old man came up the port side.  
 He said, "Captain, Captain, the water's over the first  
 fireroom door."  
 He said, "Shine, Shine, have no doubt.  
 We got forty-nine pumps to pump the water out.

Shine went down and he came up again.  
 He said, "Captain, look! That damn water's still coming in."  
 Captain said, "Shine, Shine, have no doubt,  
 Now we have ninety-nine pumps to pump the water out."  
 He said, "Captain, there was a time when your word might  
 be true,  
 But this is one damn time your word won't do.

So Shine he jumped overboard. He took two kicks, one stroke,  
 He was off like a P.T. boat.  
 Captain came up on the deck. He said, "Shine, Shine, save  
 poor me.  
 I'll give you more money than any black man want to see."  
 Shine said, "You know my color and you guessed my race.  
 Come in here and give these sharks a chase."

Captain's daughter came up on deck,  
 Drawers in her hand, brassiere around her neck.  
 She said, "Shine, Shine, save poor me.  
 Give you more pregnant pussy than a black man want  
 to see."  
 Shine said, "I know you're pregnant, 'bout to have  
 a kid,  
 But if that boat sink two more inches, you'll swim this  
 coast just like Shine did."

The Captain's wife came up on deck. She said, "Shine,  
 Shine, save poor me.  
 I'll let you eat pussy like a rat eats cheese."  
 Shine said, "I like pussy, I ain't no rat.  
 I like cock, but not like that."

Shine kept a-swimming.  
 Shine came past the whale's den.  
 The whale invited old Shine in.  
 Shine said, "I know you're king of the ocean, king of  
 the sea,  
 But you gotta be a water-splashing motherfucker to out-  
 swim me."

So Shine kept on stroking.  
 Now Shine met up with the shark.  
 Shark said, "Shine, Shine, can't you see.  
 When you jump in these waters you belongs to me."  
 Shine said, "I know you outswim the barracuda, outsmart  
 every fish in the sea,  
 But you gotta be a stroking motherfucker to outswim me."

Shine kept a-swimming.  
 When the word got to Washington that the great Titanic  
 had sunk,  
 Shine was on Broadway, one-third drunk.

(13) 4/8/59

# D

The eighth of May was one hell of a day  
 When the Titanic was sinking away.  
 Babies was crying and mothers was dying.  
 Boy, what a hell of a day,  
 The Titanic was sinking away.

Well on aboard that ship they had a man named Shine.  
 He ran up to the Captain, said, "Captain, Captain, don't  
 you know,  
 There's a leak in your boiler-room floor?"  
 Captain looked at Shine, said, "Shine, Shine, have no fear.  
 Got three pumps to keep the water out of here."

Shine went down and closed the boiler-room door,  
 And he didn't fear no more,  
 Till the water come up to his waist.  
 He said, "Captain, Captain, don't you know,  
 You got nine holes in your boiler-room floor."  
 Captain said, "Shine, Shine, have no fear,  
 We got nine pumps to keep the water out of here."

He went down below. The water came up to his neck.  
 He said, "Captain, Captain, don't you know,  
 You got ninety-nine holes in the boiler-room floor?"  
 Captain said, "Shine, Shine, have no fear,  
 We got ninety-nine pumps to keep the water out of here."  
 He said, "Captain, Captain, I know your word is true."  
 He said, "But if you want the water out of here, you got to  
 get down there and pump it till your ass is blue."

Shine jumped overboard and begin to swim.  
 Now the millionaire on board, with his daughter was packing  
 his trunk.  
 He land in the motherfucking porthole, damn-near drunk.  
 She went up on deck with her drawers below her knees.  
 She said, "Shine, Shine, save poor me.  
 I'll give much pussy as pussy can be."  
 Shine says, "Pussy on land, there's pussy on the sea,  
 But the pussy on land's the pussy for me."

So Shine started to swim, he begin to stroke.  
 He begin to wiggle like a motorboat.  
 And the Captain run up, said, "Shine, Shine, save poor me.  
 I'll give you much money as money can be."  
 Shine said, "Captain, that might be,  
 But you got to jump in this motherfucking water and swim  
 like me."

He swam, he swam, he begin to stroke.  
 He was beginning to move like a motorboat.  
 Till he swam up to a shark.  
 He said, "Mr. Shark, of all the fishes in the sea,  
 I'll be damned if you can outswim me.  
 Your eyes may shine, your teeth may grip  
 (couldn't remember any more)

## E

The eighth of May was a hell of a day  
 When the Titanic was sinking away.  
 Yeah, what a hell of a day, when the news reached the  
 seaport town  
 The Titanic was sinking down.

Shine went below deck, eating his peas  
 Till the water come up to his knees.  
 Shine went up on deck, said, "Captain, I was downstairs  
 eating my peas  
 Till the water come up to my knees."  
 Captain said, "Shine, Shine, sit your black ass down.  
 I got ninety-nine pumps to pump the water down."

Shine went back down below deck, looking through space  
 Till the water came up to his waist.  
 Shine went up on deck, said, "Captain, I was downstairs  
 looking through space  
 Till the water came up to my waist."  
 Captain said, "Shine, Shine, sit your ass down,  
 Got ninety-nine pumps to pump the water down."

Shine went down below deck eating his bread  
 Till the water came up to his head.  
 Shine went up on deck, said, "Captain, I was downstairs  
 eating my bread  
 Till the water came up to my head."  
 He said, "Shine, Shine, sit you ass down.  
 Got ninety-nine pumps to pump the water down."

Shine took off his shirt and started to take a dive.  
 Captain's daughter came over to Shine,  
 Said, "Shine, Shine, save poor me.  
 Give you all the pussy eyes ever did see."  
 Shine said, "Pussy ain't nothing but meat on the bone,  
 You can fuck, you can suck it, you can leave it alone."

Shine jumped in the water and met up with a shark.  
 Shark said, "Shine, Shine,  
 You miss one stroke, your black ass is mine.  
 Shine said, "You may be king of the ocean, king of the  
 sea,  
 You got to be a swimming motherfucker to outswim me."  
 And Shine swim on.

Stackolee

The history of the notorious badman Stackolee (or Stagolee) is indeed a curious one. Glancing at the various stories and songs concerning him, it is evident that he was a 'bully,' a self-appointed guardian, the cock-of-the-walk of a neighborhood or a small town.

Stagolee was a bully man, an' ev'ybody knowed  
When seed Stagolee comin' to give Stagolee de road.  
Oh, dat man, bad man, Stagolee done come. 22

This kind of personage used to be common in Southern towns among the Negro community and is still flourishing in parts of the South. He has his roots in primitive tribalism (leadership by prowess, or apparent control of people and/or nature), and his modern urban counterpart is the gang-leader. The bully is not responsive or responsible to white laws or society; he is a law unto himself, and his only obligation is to uphold, by his physical powers, the honor of the neighborhood, or town. In many cases, when he is not fighting, he may be terrorizing, in one way or another, his own neighbors, but even though he may be mean by nature, he seems to remain extremely attractive to women. (The portrait of 'Crown' in "Porgy and Bess" seems to be an accurate picture of this type.)

In his guise as guardian, the bully is liable to attack from those that would depose him, either from the same neighborhood, or from another.



He is a 'bad man' both by nature and in the sense that his acts almost always violate the white man's laws. But he is not really to be judged by such morality, at least by his own people, as the apparent (approved) amorality of toasts and songs about Stack testifies.

Odum and Johnson describe Stack in terms of the bully. They say:

The notorious character is sung as a hero of the tribe. His deeds are marvelous, his personality is interesting. He is admired by young and old in song and story and undoubtedly has an important influence upon the group.<sup>23</sup>

It is evident that Stack's most celebrated exploit (the one described in all of the ballads and toasts), the fight between he and Billy Lyons, was a fight between two bullies. 'Bully' and 'Billy' are so similarly pronounced that they could be easily interchanged; Billy's last name may originally have been 'lion' (it is not untypical for a leader of this sort to take on the name of an animal, which may be a vestige of totemism), and this Billy Lyons may thus originally have been 'Bully Lion.'<sup>24</sup> 'Lyon' is just as typical a spelling as 'Lyons,' and

<sup>23</sup>Odum, Howard W., and Guy B. Johnson, The Negro and His Songs, Chapel Hill, 1925, p. 196.

<sup>24</sup>It is interesting to note that in Onah Spencer's piece, "Stackolee," which is a semi-literary rehandling of traditional material (originally published in Direction, Vol. IV [Summer, 1941], pp. 14-17, and later printed by Botkin in A Treasury of American Folklore, New York, 1944, pp. 122-30, and Hughes and Bontemps, op. cit., pp. 361-3), there is a stanza:

"Jailer, jailer, says Stack, "I can't sleep.  
For round my bedside poor Billy Lyons still creeps.

"He comes in shape of a lion with a blue steel in his hand,  
For he knows I'll stand and fight if he comes in shape of man."

Richard Dorson spells it as the animal.<sup>25</sup> One of the earliest versions of the song simply calls him 'big bully':

I got up one mornin' jus' 'bout four o'clock;  
Stagolee and big bully done have one finish' fight.  
What 'bout? All 'bout dat rawhide Stetson hat.

Stagolee shot bully; bully fell down on de flo',  
Bully cry out: "Dat fohty-fo' it hurts me so."  
Stagolee done kill dat bully now.<sup>26</sup>

Most of the reported versions of the song involve the story of Stack killing Billy because the latter won Stack's Stetson hat. The earliest versions, however, are not so explicit. The two texts published by Odum in 1911 neither specify any of the victims; in one it is simply:

Stagolee started out, he give his wife his han';  
Goodbye, darlin', I'm goin' to kill a man."

Stagolee killed a man an' laid him on de flo',  
What's dat he kill him wid? Dat same ole fohty-fo.<sup>27</sup>

Most versions begin with some sort of introduction about Stack's badman characteristics:

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<sup>25</sup>Dorson, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-2. Also notice introduction of Billy Lion into the animal toast, page 322.

<sup>26</sup>Odum and Johnson, *op. cit.*, 196-8. First printed, JAF, 24, p. 288. Also reprinted, Leach, MacEdward, *The Ballad Book*, New York, 1955, pp. 755-6; Scarborough, Dorothy, *On the Trail of Negro Folksong*, Cambridge, Mass., 1925, pp. 92-3.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 197.

Stagolee, he was a bad man, an' ev'body know,  
He toted a stack-barreled blow gun an' a blue steel 44.<sup>28</sup>

Stackerlee, he was a bad man,  
He wanted the whole round world to know  
He toted a 32-20  
And a smokeless 44.<sup>29</sup>

I remember when I was a little boy,  
Sittin' on my mother's knee,  
She often told me the story  
About that bad man, Stackerlee.<sup>30</sup>

There then usually follows a description of the gambling in which Billy wins the hat. Often it begins with a 'discovery' verse:

It was late last night  
I thought I heard my bulldog bark  
Stagolee and Billy Lyons,  
Squabblin' in the dark.<sup>31</sup>

and proceeds to the apparent victory of Billy. Stack gets his gun and comes back to get Billy, and he often pleads for him not to kill him.

Stagolee found Billy,  
"Oh, please don't take my life.

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<sup>28</sup>Lomax, John A., and Alan Lomax, American Ballads and Folk Songs, New York, 1934, p. 96.

<sup>29</sup>"Negro Prison Songs," collected and annotated by Alan Lomax, Tradition Records, TLP 1020, Side B, Band 7.

<sup>30</sup>"Blues in the Mississippi Night," collected and edited by Alan Lomax, United Artists, UAL 4027 (end of Side A).

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

I got three little children  
And a very sick little wife.<sup>32</sup>

The shooting itself is often described graphically:

Stagolee shot Billy,  
Oh, he shot that boy so fas'  
That the bullet came through him  
And broke my window glass.<sup>33</sup>

In some versions there follows a trial scene, and in some others "Stack" is killed and goes to Hell. In some of these latter, he beats the Devil at his own game, either to be expelled or to rule in Hell.

There are quite a number of texts of the ballad in print. Odum's versions, printed in 1911, have served as the texts for many other books and collections.<sup>34</sup> The Lomaxes include two collated texts in American Ballads and Folk Songs.<sup>35</sup> See, also, Wheeler, p. 100-2; she also has "Stack" as the hero of "Bully of the Town." Alan Lomax, Folk Songs of North America, p. 306, has a text of a chain-gang work song version (see, also, Finger, 91). Onah Spencer has a long text in his saga of "Stacka-lee," which has been reprinted by Botkin and by Hughes and Bontemps, but which presents special problems concerning its semi-literary rehandling.

<sup>32</sup>"Angola Prisoners' Blues," collected by Dr. Harry Oster and Richard B. Allen, Folk-Lyric Record, LFS A-3, Side A, 2.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>New York Times Magazine, June 5, 1927. Alfred Friedman published a collated version of these texts in The Viking Book of Ballads, New York, 1956, pp. 381-2.

<sup>35</sup>pp. 93-99.

It is really only through the many recordings that one can fully realize the popularity of the ballad.<sup>36</sup>

Stack was not only a bully; he seems to have been of the roughest type, the levee-bully. His place of origin is not precisely known, but he is always associated with some town on the Mississippi. Most commentators place him from Memphis. Alan Lomax says unequivocally, "Legend has it that Stacker Lee...was the most dangerous Negro tough of Memphis in his time, and that he shot and killed Billy Lyons, because Billy stole, or, in some accounts, spat in Stack's milkwhite Stetson hat."<sup>37</sup> In a letter sending in a text of the song as sung earlier than 1910, the following remarks were made:

The origin of this ballad, I have been told was the shooting of Billy Lyons in a barroom on the Memphis levee, by Stack Lee. The song is sung by the Negroes on the levee while they are loading and unloading the river freighters, the words being composed by the singers. The characters were prominently known in Memphis. I was told, the unfortunate Stagalee belonging to the family of the Lee line of steamers, which are known on the Mississippi from Cairo to the Gulf.<sup>38</sup>

There were many such conjectures as to his birth and occupation. "His real name was Stack Lee and he was the son of the Lee family of Memphis who owned a large line of steamers that ran up and down the Mississippi....

<sup>36</sup>See references to records above, plus "Listen To Our Story," Brunswick BL 59001, Side 1, last band, as sung by Furry Lewis, and Jesse Fuller, Good Time Jazz, L-12031, side 2, band 3.

<sup>37</sup>Notes to "Negro Prison Songs," op. cit.

<sup>38</sup>Lomax, John and Alan (ABFS), op. cit., pp. 93-4.

He was a nigger what fired the engines of one of the Lee Steamers.... They was a steamer runnin' up an' down de Mississippi, name de Stacker Lee, and he was one o' de roustabouts on dat steamer. So dey called him Stackerlee."<sup>39</sup> Certain it is that there was such a steamer with his name;<sup>40</sup> Edna Ferber even included it in *Showboat*. Wheeler has a song about the boat, pp. 102-3.

The ballad and the toast stem from the same dramatic situation, the killing of Billy by Stack, but they do not share much else. In some versions of the ballad the shooting takes place in a barroom and the locale of the toast is the particular bar-cafe, "The Bucket of Blood." Gone is the controversy over the Stetson; the fight between bullies is sufficient rationale (based on the fact that Stack has shot Billy's brother). The ironic verse

Stagolee tol' Mrs. Billy, "Ef you don't b'lieve yo man  
is dead,  
Come to de barroom, see de hole I shot in his head."<sup>41</sup>

is also found in the toast, but the words are put into the mouth of the bartender's mother:

She said, "You don't mean to tell me my son is dead."  
I said, "If you don't believe it, look at those mother-  
fucking rockets in his god damn head." (C text)

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>40</sup> See MF, 10:77

<sup>41</sup> Lomax (ABFS), 97

Only in the C text is any courtroom scene included and then it is for a different purpose.

The three texts of the toasts included here are similar in many respects. They all begin with a description of the times; a catalog of Stack's earthly belongings; the walk down the street; the entering of "The Bucket of Blood"; the serving of the unfortunate meal, and the consequent killing of the bartender; the arrival of the dead man's mother and her warning about the coming of her other son, Billy Lyons (or Benny Long); the deploying tactic of the girl to keep Stack there by "taking him upstairs"; the arrival of Billy; the fight; and Billy's demise. Each adds little interesting scenes, such as the other characters in the bar in the "A" text. The endings of the "A" and "B" texts are conventional boasts which may well have traveled from the river with the stories of Stack. The ending of the "C" text is the conventional courtroom scene described in the introduction to this chapter.

Nothing like the toast has ever appeared in print. D. K. Wilgus has sent four texts from the Western Kentucky Folklore Archive which are very similar to the Philadelphia texts. Three of his texts have the same general plan of the "C" text of this collection. The fourth has the outlines of "A" and "B" with the boast at the end, and also has the type of signature to be found in Arthur Snell's version of "The Monkey and the Baboon."

There are, however, two places in which toast-like pieces appear in print concerning the Stackolee story. The first of these is contained in an article by Richard Dorson, "Negro Tales." He includes two texts which show clearly that the ballad and the toast are related. His

first text includes verses from the ballad, including the one about the bulldog barking and arguing in the dark, and goes on to a number of lines of boasts including the one commonly found in the toast about rattlesnakes crawling off and dying.<sup>42</sup> His second text is sometimes in verse form, sometimes in prose, and also includes verses from the ballad.<sup>43</sup> The prose passages show, by their occasional rhymes some contact with a toast; this is also shown in the references to clocks and time, which is found often in the toast, but not, so far as I have found, in the song. Hughes and Bontemps<sup>44</sup> include a similar text that seems to be in toast form, but which has the story as told in ballad, and which ends with "Stack" running Hell after vanquishing the Devil and having an affair with his wife. 'Kid' gives a similar narrative about "Stack," but as a joke (see page 362).

Included after the "A" text is a phonemic transcription, done by Earl Rand of the University of Texas. It is included in hopes that it will convey some of the style of performance, as well as the dialect of the narrator.

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<sup>42</sup>These boasts are some widely known ones. JAF, 40:293, has the similar:

I was born in a backyard  
Suckled by a bear  
I got nine sets of jaw teeth  
An' three coaches of hair.

See the rattlesnake boast in Thorp, N. Howard, Songs of the Cowboys, Boston and New York, 1921, p. 17, in a song called "Buckskin Jose."

<sup>43</sup>Dorson, Western Folklore, op. cit., pp. 160-2

<sup>44</sup>Hughes and Bontemps, op. cit., pp. 361-3.



## A

Back in '32 when times was hard  
 I had a sawed-off shotgun and a crooked deck of cards,  
 Pin-striped suit, fucked-up hat,  
 T-model Ford, didn't even have a payment on that.  
 Had a cute little broad, she threwed me out in the cold.  
 I asked her why, she said, "Our love is growing old."  
 So I packed all my little rags, took a walk down Rampail Street.  
 That's where all the bad motherfuckers went down to meet.  
 I walked through water and I waded through mud,  
 Come a little hole-in-the-wall, they call the "Bucket of Blood."  
 I walked in and asked the bartender, "Dig chief, can I get  
 something to eat?"  
 He throwed me a stale glass of water and flung me a fucked-up  
 piece of meat.  
 I said, "Raise, motherfucker, do you know who I am?"  
 He said, "Frankly, motherfucker, I just don't give a damn."  
 I knowed right then that chickenshit was dead.  
 I throwed a 38 shell through his motherfucking head.  
 So a broad walked over, she said, "Pardon me, please.  
 Can you tell me where the bartender is, please?"  
 I said, "Sure, whore, behind the bar with his mind at ease."  
 She looked back and screamed, "No! My son can't be dead."  
 I said, "You don't think so? Look at the hole in that mother-  
 fucker's head."  
 She said, "Who did this terrible crime, may I ask you please?"  
 I said, "Me, bitch, and my name is Stackolee."  
 She said, "Oh, I heard of you, Stack, from the tales of old.  
 Be here when my son Benny Long get back."  
 I said, "Bitch, I'll be here till the world go to pass.  
 You tell your son, Benny Long, that I said, 'kiss my ass.'"  
 Just then a cute little broad came over, a terrible smile.  
 She looked me up and down and said, "You look like you ain't  
 had none, Daddy, in quite a while."  
 I said, "Now raise, bitch, don't hand me that shit.  
 I'm used to pussy quite a bit."  
 She looked at her watch, it was quarter to eight.  
 She said, "Come on upstairs, I'ma set you straight."  
 The bed gave a twist, the springs gave a twistle.  
 I throwed nine inches of joint to the whore before she could  
 move a gristle.  
 We came back downstairs. They was fucking on the bar, sucking  
 on the floor.  
 Just then you could hear a pin drop, for that bad-ass Benny  
 Long walked in the door.  
 Now he walked over to the bar where his brother lay dead,  
 And quietly said,  
 "Who had nerve to put a hole in my brother's head?"  
 I jumped up and screamed, "Me, motherfucker, put your mind  
 at ease.  
 I'm known as a bad motherfucker called Stackolee."  
 He said, "Oh, I heard of you, Stack, from tales of old.  
 But you know you done tore your ass when you fucked my hole.

I'ma give you the chance my brother never had. I'ma give you  
the chance to run,  
Before I throw open my bad-ass cashmere and pull my bad-ass gun."  
Just then some little short motherfucker, way over in the corner  
jumped up and hollared, "Somebody call the law."  
Benny Long threw a 45 shell through the motherfucker's jaw.  
His broad walked over, she said, "Benny, please."  
He beat that whore down to her motherfucking knees.  
Just then everything got black, 'cause out went the lights.  
I had that old bad-ass Benny Long in my 38 sights.  
When the lights came back on and all the best,  
I had sent that old bad motherfucker to internal (sic) rest.  
Thirteen 38 bulletholes 'cross his motherfucking chest.  
His boys jumped up and said, "Ain't this a shame.  
Here's a man got our boss, Benny Long there on the floor dead.  
This jive-ass motherfucker's reputation we haven't ever heard."  
They dove in their coats and went down for this shit.  
I said, "Cool it! motherfuckers, let me tell you a bit.  
I was born in the backwoods, for my pet my father raised a bear.  
I got two sets of jawbone teeth, and an extra layer of hair.  
When I was three I sat in a barrel of knives.  
A rattlesnake bit me and crawled off and died.  
'Cause when I sit down I ain't no stranger,  
'Cause after I get up and leave, my ass-hole print leaves  
'danger.'"

The Poem

The symbols are as follows:

drawl	⤿
overflow pitch	↓
overhigh	↑
extreme overhigh	↑↑
devoiced	ʋ
overvoiced	ov
increased tempo	>
decreased	<
smooth rhythm	∞
jerky	≈
sharp transition	↘
smooth	↗
breathy	ʀ
overtense, rasp	ʔ
overlap, openness	o
forceful articulation control	ʰ
relaxed	ʳ
overloud	ʋʌ
oversoft	ʋs
narrow pitch range	↕
spread	↑↓
breaking	Bk
falsetto	Fo

/ + / is indicated by a white space unless it is / + C + /, lines 2, 11, 23, 41, and 46.

Weak stress is not marked.

/c/ = /č/ = [tš]

/j/ = /j̣/ = [dž]

1      4 ^ 3    \ 2 3 / 3    2 \ 3 /    2 \ 3 ^ 2  
       bækin θædi tuw | win taymz wəz həd #

2      2 \ 3    sãhdaf šãtgən | 2 /    3 ^ 2  
       h+ hädə sãhdaf šãtgən | krukə dekə kãhdz #

↓

3      2 /    ^ 2    3 / 3    2 / 3 ^ 1  
       pín strayp | syuwt || fək tēp hæt #

4      2 ^ 3 ^    / 1    2 \    \    3 / \    ^ 2 ^ 1  
       tiy mani fəhd || didəniyvən həvə pəyminton næt #

↑

5      2 \ 4 ^ 3 ^ 4 / 2    2 \    ^    \    \    3 / 1  
       hädə kyuwt lidəl brəhd | šiy θowd miy awtine kowl #

6      2 \ ^ 3 / 2    2 \    ^ \ 3 / 2 \    \    1  
       ay æs tē way | šiy seydeh ləv wɪzgrowin owl #

7      2 \ 4 \ 2 ^    \    \    ^ 3 / 2    2 \    \    ^ 3 /    ^    ^ 1  
       sow a pæk təl malidəl rægz || təkə wək dawn rəm pel striyt #

↓

8      2    ^    \    \    2    3    3    ^    ^    2    2    ^    \    ^ 1  
       oäts hwe ɔləə bæhd | məðəfəkəz | wint dawn tēmiyt #

↑  
 9 a wəkt θuw wɔdə | 2 əna wɛyd θuw mɛd #

←  
 10 kəmə lɪdɛl hɔwlinðə wɔl | 2 ɔɛy kɔlðə bəkətə + b + lɛd #

↑  
 11 a wɔk tɪnən + n + æk ɔə bahtɪndə || dɪg | 2 cɪyf || kɪna  
 2 2 3  
 gɪt sɛmpəm + d + iyt ||

12 hiy θowd miyə stɛyl glæsə wɔdə | slɛŋ miyə fɛk tɛp  
 2 1  
 piysə miyt #

↑  
 13 a sed | reyz | mæðəfɛfəkə | duw yuw nɔ huwəh æm ||

14 hiy sed | frɛyŋkliy mæðəfəkə | 3 ah jɪs dɔwn? gɪvə dæhm #

15 a nɔwd rayt ɔəhn | ɔæt ɔɪkɪnsɪt wɛz dehd #

16 a θowdə θærdɪy eyt sehl | θuw hɪz mæðəfɛkɪn hehd #

- 17  $\overset{3}{\text{so}}\overset{\wedge}{\text{h}}\text{ə} \text{ } \text{brahd} \text{ } \text{w}\overset{\wedge}{\text{o}}\text{k} \text{ } \text{t}\overset{2}{\text{o}}\text{v}\text{ə} \mid \text{ } \overset{2}{\text{ʃ}}\overset{\wedge}{\text{i}} \text{ } \text{sed} \mid \text{ } \text{p}\overset{3}{\text{a}}\text{hdən} \text{ } \text{m}\overset{2}{\text{i}}\text{y} \text{ } \text{pl}\overset{\wedge}{\text{i}}\text{y}\text{z} \mid$
- 18  $\text{ } \text{k}\overset{2}{\text{i}}\text{n} \text{ } \text{y}\overset{3}{\text{u}}\text{w} \text{ } \text{t}\overset{\wedge}{\text{e}}\text{lm}\overset{2}{\text{i}}\text{y} \mid \text{ } \text{w}\overset{2}{\text{e}}\text{h} \text{ } \text{ə}\overset{3}{\text{ə}}\text{b}\overset{\wedge}{\text{a}}\text{h}\text{t}\text{ind}\text{ə} \text{ } \text{i}\overset{2}{\text{h}}\text{z} \parallel \text{ } \text{pl}\overset{3}{\text{i}}\text{y}\text{z} \parallel$
- 19  $\text{ } \text{a} \text{ } \text{sed} \parallel \text{ } \overset{3}{\text{ʃ}}\overset{\wedge}{\text{o}}\text{h} \mid \text{ } \text{h}\overset{3}{\text{o}}\text{h} \parallel \text{ } \text{bə}\overset{2}{\text{h}}\text{ayn} \text{ } \text{ə}\overset{3}{\text{ə}}\text{bah} \mid \text{ } \text{w}\overset{2}{\text{i}}\overset{3}{\text{ə}}\text{iz} \text{ } \text{m}\overset{\wedge}{\text{a}}\text{yn} \text{ } \text{d}\overset{1}{\text{ə}}\text{di}\text{y}\text{z} \#$
- 20  $\text{ } \text{si}\overset{2}{\text{y}} \text{ } \text{l}\overset{\wedge}{\text{u}}\text{k} \text{ } \text{bə}\overset{3}{\text{k}}\text{i}\text{n} \text{ } \text{s}\overset{2}{\text{k}}\text{ri}\text{ym}\overset{2}{\text{ə}} \# \text{ } \text{now} \parallel \text{ } \text{ma} \text{ } \text{s}\overset{2}{\text{ə}}\text{n} \text{ } \text{k}\overset{3}{\text{e}}\text{y}\text{nt} \text{ } \text{bi}\overset{\wedge}{\text{y}} \text{ } \text{d}\overset{2}{\text{e}}\text{hd} \#$
- 21  $\text{ } \text{a} \text{ } \text{sed} \mid \text{ } \text{y}\overset{2}{\text{u}}\text{w} \text{ } \text{d}\overset{\wedge}{\text{o}}\text{wn?} \text{ } \text{θ}\overset{3}{\text{i}}\text{ŋ}\text{k} \text{ } \text{s}\overset{\wedge}{\text{o}}\text{w} \parallel \text{ } \text{l}\overset{2}{\text{u}}\text{k}\text{ət} \text{ } \text{ə}\overset{3}{\text{ə}}\text{h}\text{owl} \mid \text{ } \text{i}\overset{2}{\text{n}} \text{ } \text{ə}\overset{\wedge}{\text{ə}}\text{t}$
- $\text{ } \text{m}\overset{\wedge}{\text{ə}}\overset{\wedge}{\text{ə}}\text{f}\overset{3}{\text{ə}}\text{k}\overset{\wedge}{\text{ə}}\text{h}\text{z} \text{ } \text{h}\overset{1}{\text{e}}\text{hd} \#$
- 22  $\text{ } \text{si}\overset{3}{\text{y}} \text{ } \text{s}\overset{\wedge}{\text{e}}\text{d} \mid \text{ } \text{h}\overset{3}{\text{u}}\text{w}\text{did} \text{ } \text{ə}\overset{\wedge}{\text{i}}\text{s} \text{ } \text{t}\overset{4}{\text{e}}\text{r}\overset{\wedge}{\text{ə}}\text{b}\overset{\wedge}{\text{ə}}\text{l} \text{ } \text{k}\overset{3}{\text{r}}\text{aym} \mid \text{ } \text{m}\overset{2}{\text{e}}\text{y} \text{ } \text{a}\overset{\wedge}{\text{ə}} \text{ } \text{ə}\overset{\wedge}{\text{s}} \text{ } \text{y}\overset{3}{\text{u}}\text{w} \text{ } \text{pl}\overset{\wedge}{\text{i}}\text{y}\text{z} \parallel$
- 23  $\text{ } \text{a} \text{ } \text{s}\overset{2}{\text{e}}\text{d} \parallel \text{ } \text{m}\overset{3}{\text{i}}\text{y} \mid \text{ } \text{bi}\overset{2}{\text{c}} \mid \text{ } \text{ə}\overset{2}{\text{m}} \text{ } \text{m}\overset{2}{\text{a}}\text{y} \text{ } \text{n}\overset{\wedge}{\text{e}}\text{ym} \mid \text{ } \text{i}\overset{2}{\text{z}}\text{+}\text{s} \text{ } \text{t}\overset{3}{\text{ə}}\text{k}\overset{\wedge}{\text{ə}}\text{li}\text{y} \#$
- 24  $\text{ } \text{si}\overset{3}{\text{y}} \text{ } \text{s}\overset{\wedge}{\text{e}}\text{hd} \mid \text{ } \text{ə}\overset{3}{\text{w}}\text{?} \mid \text{ } \text{a} \text{ } \text{h}\overset{2}{\text{ə}}\text{rd}\text{ə} \text{ } \text{y}\overset{\wedge}{\text{u}}\text{w} \mid \text{ } \text{s}\overset{2}{\text{t}}\overset{\wedge}{\text{ə}}\text{k} \parallel \text{ } \text{fr}\overset{2}{\text{ə}}\text{m} \text{ } \text{ə}\overset{\wedge}{\text{ə}}\text{t}\text{ə} \text{y}\text{l}\text{z}$
- $\text{ } \text{ə}\overset{3}{\text{v}} \text{ } \text{owl} \#$

25 <sup>1</sup> bəcetu | <sup>2</sup> biy <sup>1</sup> hah | in ma sən biniyləh | <sup>2</sup> git bək #

26 <sup>2</sup> a sed | <sup>3</sup> biç || <sup>4</sup> al bihih | <sup>2</sup> tɪlɔə werl <sup>3</sup> godə pəhs #

27 <sup>2</sup> yuw tel yoh sən | <sup>2</sup> beniy ləh | <sup>2</sup> ɔət a sed | <sup>3</sup> kis | <sup>3</sup> mā |  
<sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup>  
 əhs #

28 <sup>2</sup> jis dɪn | <sup>2</sup> ɛ kwɪ lidəl brɔh kəmoveh <sup>3</sup> ətəɾəbəl smahl ||

29 <sup>2</sup> siy lukt tətmiy əpən <sup>2</sup> dawn ən sed || <sup>2</sup> yuw luklah yuw ən? <sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup>  
 hədnən | dediy | in kwatə wal #

30 <sup>3</sup> a sed <sup>2</sup> naw | <sup>3</sup> reyz | <sup>2</sup> biç | <sup>2</sup> dən hənmi <sup>3</sup> ɔət sit ||

31 <sup>2</sup> am yuws təpuhsiy | <sup>2</sup> kwaydə bit #

32 <sup>2</sup> siyze | <sup>2</sup> siy lukt təhə wac | <sup>2</sup> iwəz kwahdə dəheyt #

33  $\downarrow$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   
 2  $\backslash$  3  $\wedge$  2 2  $\wedge$  3 2 2  $\wedge$  3 1  
 siy sed | kōmōnəp stēhz | am gōn sēt yuw strēyt #

34  $\uparrow$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   
 2  $\backslash$  3  $\wedge$  2  $\backslash$  2 2  $\wedge$  3 2  
 ðə bed geyvə twist || sprɪŋz gəvə twisəl #

35  $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   $\downarrow$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   
 2  $\backslash$  3  $\wedge$  2 3  $\backslash$  2  $\wedge$  2 2  $\backslash$  3 1 #  
 a-θowd nayninsev jəynt təðəhoh | bifoh siykəd muwvə grisəl #

36  $\uparrow$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   $\downarrow$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   
 3  $\backslash$  2  $\wedge$   $\backslash$  2 2  $\wedge$  2 3  $\wedge$  2  
 wiy kəm bæk dawn stēhz | ðeh wəz | fəkin ɔnde bāh |  
 2  $\backslash$  3 2  
 fəkin ɔnde flōh #

37  $\downarrow$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   
 2  $\wedge$   $\backslash$  3  $\wedge$  2 2  $\wedge$  3  
 jis ðin yuwkəd hehə pin drap | fəh ðæt bāh dās |  
 3  $\wedge$  2 2  $\wedge$  3 1  
 binɪylɔŋ | wəkt tin ðə doh #

38  $\downarrow$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   $\downarrow$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   
 2  $\wedge$  3  $\backslash$  2  $\wedge$  2  $\wedge$  2 2  
 nāwhi wək tove tədə bāh | wehə brəðə ley dəd | ən  
 $\downarrow$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   
 kwah ətliɪ səd |

39  $\downarrow$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   $\uparrow$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   
 4  $\backslash$  2 2  $\wedge$  3  $\backslash$  2 2  $\backslash$  4 3  $\wedge$  1  
 huw || hæðə nəhv | tə putə howlɪn mäh brədəz hehd ||

40  $\uparrow$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   $\uparrow$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   $\downarrow$   $\overline{\quad\quad\quad}$   
 3  $\backslash$  2  $\wedge$  2 4 3 3  $\wedge$  3 2  $\wedge$  3  $\wedge$  3 1  
 a jəmp dəpən skriymd || miɪ | məðəfək || put joh mahn dæt iyz #



- 41 ahm nown əzə bahd | mēdēfēkəh kōld | stæk kə liy #
- 42 hih sed | hoh # ah hēhīdē yuw | stæk || frəmdē tēylz  
ev owl #
- 43 bēt juw nōw yuwdən fēktyo əs | tōn yoh əs | win yuw  
fēkt mah hōh #
- 44 nē ahm gon givyuw dē cānts | mahb brēōē nēvə hād #  
ahm gon givyuw dē cānstē rēn #
- 45 bēfoh ah θow mah bādəs kēzmih | ənpul mah bādəs gēn #
- 46 jis ōin sēm lidel | stəht mēōfēkəh | wey ovē indē  
kōhnēh | jēmp dēpīn hālēd | sēm bādī | kōhl dē loh #
- 47 bililōŋ θowdē fōdī fahv sēl | θuwōē mēōfēkəhz jōh #





## B

Back in '32 when times was hard  
 Had a sawed-off shotgun with a crooked deck of cards.  
 Had a pin-striped suit, old fucked-up hat,  
 And a T-model Ford, not a payment on that.  
 I had a cute little whore, threw me out in the cold.  
 When I asked her why, she said, "Our love is growing old."  
 I took a little walk down Rampart Street,  
 Where all them bad-assed motherfuckers meet.  
 I walked through water and I waded through mud.  
 I came to a little-old hole-in-the-wall called the "Bucket  
 of Blood."  
 I walked in, asked the man for something to eat.  
 Do you know that bastard gave me a stale glass of water and a  
 fucked-up piece of meat.  
 I said, "Raise, motherfucker, do you know who I am?"  
 He said, "Frankly, I don't give a damn."  
 I know right then that sucker was dead.  
 I threw a 38 shell through that motherfucker's head.  
 Now a cute little whore came up and said, "Where's the bar-  
 tender, please?"  
 I said, "Look behind the bar, baby, he's with his mind at ease."  
 She grabbed her head.  
 She said, "No, my son can't be dead."  
 I said, "No? Look at the hole in that motherfucker's head."  
 She said, "Who did this crime, may I ask you, please?"  
 I said, "Me, bitch, and they call me Stackolee."  
 She said, "I heard of you Stack,  
 But you better not be here when my son Benny Long gets back."  
 I said, "Bitch, I'll be here when the world go to pass.  
 And you can tell Benny Long he can kiss my ass."  
 Still another cute little whore came up, said, "Where's the  
 bartender?"  
 Hi there, baby, where's the bartender, if you please?"  
 I said, "Look behind the bar, he's with his mind at ease."  
 So she peeped at her watch, it was seven of eight.  
 She said, "Come upstairs, baby, let me set you straight.  
 Now we went upstairs, the springs give a twistle.  
 I threw nine inches of dick into that bitch before she  
 could move her gristle.  
 Now we came downstairs big and bold.  
 They was fucking on the bar, sucking on the floor.  
 Then you could hear a pin drop. Benny Long came in.  
 He walked over where his brother lay dead, and he calmly said,  
 "Who had the nerve to put a hole in my brother's head?"  
 When I jumped up. I said, "Me, motherfucker, so put your mind  
 at ease.  
 I'm that bad-ass so-and-so they call Stackolee."  
 He said, "I heard of you, Stack, from the tales of old,  
 But you know you tore your ass when you fucked my hole.

But I'ma give you the chance my brother never got. I'ma  
 give you a chance to run,  
 'Fore I reach in my cashmere and pull out my bad-ass gun."  
 Just then some old sucker over in the corner said, "Somebody  
 call the law."  
 He stretched out and put a 45 shell through that motherfucker's  
 jaw.  
 A cute little whore came over and said, "Benny, please."  
 He blowed that bitch down to her knees.  
 And out went the lights,  
 And Benny Long was in both of my 38 sights.  
 Now the lights came on and all the best.  
 I sent that sucker to eternal rest.  
 With thirteen 38 bulletholes 'cross his motherfucking chest.  
 This boy said, "Who is this sucker whose name we haven't heard  
 Got our boss laying there dead?  
 We ought to kill this motherfucker to fuck him up."  
 I said, "Cool it, motherfucker, let me tell you a bit.  
 I was raised in the backwoods, where my pa raised a bear.  
 And I got three sets of jawbone teeth and an extra layer of hair.  
 When I was three I sat in a barrel of knives,  
 Then a rattlesnake bit me, crawled off and died.  
 So when I come in here, I'm no stranger,  
 'Cause when I leave my ass-hole print leaves 'danger.'"

(28) 3/23/59

# C

In 1938 when things was hard  
 I had a crooked pair of dice and a stacked deck of cards.  
 I waded through water and I waded through mud  
 Until I came to a place called the "Bucket of Blood."  
 Now I went in to get myself a little something to eat  
 And the waiter brought me back a muddy glass of water and a  
 tough-ass piece of meat.  
 I said, "Say, motherfucker, do you know who this might be?  
 This is that bad motherfucker named Stackolee."  
 The waiter looked at me and said,  
 "I heard 'bout you from 'cross the way,  
 But I feed you hungry motherfuckers each and every day.  
 Now I pull out my gun and layed three rockets in his  
 motherfucking head.  
 He fell out behind the counter dead.  
 Little lady come in and said, "Where's the waiter, please?"  
 I said, "He's laying behind the counter with his mind at ease."  
 She said, "You don't mean to tell me my son is dead."

I said, "If you don't believe it, look at those motherfucking rockets in his god damn head."

She fell out on the god damn floor,

And here come walked up to me a pretty little whore.

Said, "Hello, Stackolee, I haven't seen you in a mighty long time."

She looked at the clock, it was about quarter to eight.

She said, "Come on upstairs and I'll see you straight."

Now I went upstairs and we begin to fuck.

I begin to push dick to this whore like a ten-ton truck.

And then everything was going 'long fine

When out walked Billy Lyon.

At first I thought it was the motherfucking law,

The way the hinges jumped off the god-damned door.

I looked around, said, "What the fuck this might be?"

He said, "You know you bad motherfucker, I know your name is Stackolee."

I said, "And by the way, what's your name, look so fine?"

He said, "Shut up, motherfucker, this is Billy Lyon."

Now some dirty bitch turned out the light,

But I had Billy Lyon in my god-damned sight.

One little bitch hollared, "Stackolee, please."

I shot that bitch clean to her knees.

The other one hollared, "Call the law."

I shot that bitch in the god-damned jaw.

Now three of them old Mississippi police came in all loud and raunchy.

Let's kick this motherfucker's ass and go on home.

Well I guess it was 'round nine o'clock, or somewhere 'round ten

I was standing before some jive-ass judge and ten other men.

One motherfucker said, "What may the chargers be?"

One said, "Murder," one said, "Rape," one said, "Murder in the third degree."

Then the old judge said, "Well, how might he die?"

One said, "Hang him," one said, "Give him gas."

Little lady jumped up in the courtroom and said, "Run 'lectricity through the rotten motherfucker's ass."

I grabbed that bitch by the seat of her drawers

And threw her out the courtroom door.

Judge said, "Stackolee, I see you're a man without any fear,

So I'ma give you ninety-nine years."

I looked at him, said, "Judge, ninety-nine ain't no god-damn time.

My father's in Sing Sing doing two-ninety-nine.

### The Signifying Monkey

These toasts about the adventures of 'The Signifying Monkey' may be the last lively gasp of the Negro tradition of animal stories. As in the famed series about 'Brer Rabbit' or even 'Anansi,' the animals act like animals often only to show the similarities of themselves to humans. As in these older tales, these toasts present a milieu which is half natural-habitat, half world-of-man, and characters which sometimes act like the animals whose names they bear and sometimes like human beings. The shift between these oppositions is done without any sense of existing conflict at all.

Deep down in the jungles, way back in the sticks,  
The animals had formed a game called 'pool.' The baboon  
was a slick.  
Now a few stalks shook and a few leaves fell.  
Up popped the monkey one day, 'bout sharp as hell.

The animals seem equally at home in the 'jungle' or on the street; the monkey is equally adept at climbing trees and shooting pool. Though he is portrayed as a tree climber, he is the sharpest of dressers by human standards.

He had a one-button roll, two-button satch.  
You know, one them boolhipper coats with a belt in  
the back.

or

He had a camel-hair benny with a belt in the back,  
He'd a pair of nice shoes and a pair of blue slacks.  
Now his clothes were cute little things,  
Was wearing a Longine watch and a diamond ring.

The baboon is easily his match, though:

The baboon stood with a crazy rim,  
Charcoal grey vine, and a stingy brim,  
Hand full of dimes, pocket full of herbs,  
Eldorado Cadillac parked at the curb.

Much like his predecessors, 'Brer Rabbit' and 'Anansi,' the monkey is a trickster figure; his mode of life, his existence depends upon his agility, mental and physical. Though not solely the possession of the Negro, the trickster figure has figured very greatly in their folklore. The fact that the monkey fits into this type is patent. He is not only a "clever hero...smaller and weaker" and a "diminutive animal" but his adventure with the lion qualifies him for the epithet of "villain" or "rogue," often attached to the trickster figure.

There is a noticeable diminution of interest among the Negro for stories of the trickster type. The spider, the rabbit, the Marster and John cycles have all, for the most part, passed out of their lore, at least among the urban Negro. The monkey here is the last remnant of this type, and it is perhaps significant that he is killed in some versions of his adventure with the lion.

It is interesting to note that this 'hero' is a monkey. In the minds of a certain segment of the white population of the world, the Negro has been associated with the monkey. Perhaps because of his African jungle heritage and the casual resemblance between some Negroid and some simian physical characteristics, the words "monkey" and "ape" have been used as derogatory words in relation to the Negro, and have achieved a meaning and notoriety not very different from 'nigger.' In



much the same way that 'nigger' has come to mean, among Negroes, any bad kind of Negro, so the word 'monkey' has come to mean any Negro that will unduly play around, and especially for the amusement of whites. As one Negro youth is reported to have said, "If you can act big enough monkey, you can get anything you want (from whites)."<sup>45</sup>

Probably because of this concept, Negro children often feel mystically related to monkeys, and call each other 'apes' or 'monkeys' in jest (just as they humorously chide each other on being blacker or just plain black). As we have a pet monkey ourselves, we were able to see much of this 'identification.' Beyond the common taunt found among children (and adults) of all races of "Look, there goes your brother," when the monkey passed, many of the Negro children developed a real kinship feeling with the monkey, erupting with such statements as, "Is he Negro?" (i.e. the monkey), or "He is colored, and I am a monkey." The same children would often look through a book of monkey pictures that we had and would comment on each, assigning someone's names to the pictures, such as "There's you." "There's her." "There's Lydia." "There's me." The identification was certainly a racial one, for certain monkeys were excluded from the name-attaching ceremony because they were 'white monkeys,' i.e. did not have such pronounced Negroid features.

Yet, the character portrayed here is not a representative of the Negro in general. He is the "Signifying Monkey" and represents the

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<sup>45</sup> Simpson, G. E., and Y. M. Yinger, Racial and Cultural Minorities, N. Y., 1953, p. 470.

recognition, by the Negro, of a certain type, found among every society (but especially noticeable to the Negro). This is the little-man type, the kind that tries to make up for his size by his mental and physical capacities, and he exercises these without consideration for anyone's welfare but his own. His is a rampant ego.

The term 'signifying' seems to be characteristically Negro in use if not in origin. This is a term that can mean any of a number of things; in the case of the toast, it certainly refers to the monkey's ability to talk, carp, cajole, needle, and lie. It can mean, in other instances, the propensity to talk around a subject, never quite coming to the point. It can mean 'making fun' of a person or situation. It can mean speaking with the hands or eyes, and in this respect encompasses a whole complex of expressions and gestures. It can also mean asking for something without asking for it. Thus, it is signifying to stir up a fight between neighbors by telling stories; it is signifying to make fun of the police by parodying his motions behind his back; it is signifying to ask for a piece of cake by saying, "Um, that cake sure looks good," or "My brother would sure like a piece of cake."

The Negro themselves seem to regard signifying as something specifically Negro. They have a saying, "Signification is the nigger's occupation." In the realm of the gesture and expression system which evolved around the term, it certainly serves them as a defense mechanism. In jail, or in other places in the 'white man's world,' they have an ability to communicate in their own secret language.<sup>46</sup> Yet,

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<sup>46</sup>op. cit., pp. 363-6

the playful aspects, the 'monkey' aspects of signifying are frowned upon by most Negroes. (There is good evidence for this in the toast.) They have the proverbs, "Signifyin' is worse than lyin'" or "Signifyin' is worse than dyin'," and a common scold from a mother is "Don't signify with me, child."

Of the two toasts concerned with the doings of the monkey, the only texts in print are of the "Signifying Monkey and the Lion." Once again, our printed text comes from Hughes and Bontemps.<sup>47</sup> It is obviously rewritten to a slight degree, but preserves most of the feeling of the original. It has an interesting moralistic ending:

Monkey, said the Lion,  
Beat to his unbooted knees,  
You and your signifying children  
Better stay up in them trees.  
Which is why today  
Monkey does his signifying  
A-way-up out of the way.

Richard Dorson prints a tale, "The Elephant, The Lion, and the Monkey," which tells the same story, with the change that the Monkey tells the Elephant the Lion is playing the dozens on him.<sup>48</sup> The toast must have a fairly wide distribution, for D. K. Wilgus has sent on two Kentucky texts very similar to the ones here printed, and a shorter text from New Jersey. I have collected one further, short text of "The Monkey

<sup>47</sup>Hughes and Bontemps, op. cit., p. 363.

<sup>48</sup>Dorson (WF), 13:87-8.

and the Baboon" in Texas. A recent pop record is very close to many of the texts here, with the interesting ending of the lion chasing the monkey into the tree and that is the reason why the monkey lives there (motif A 2433.3.19.1).

The texts of "The Monkey and the Lion" are uniform, except in some small particulars of the fights and in respect to the variable ending. The Charlie Williams text (C) has a continuation of the story which has been unreported elsewhere, in which the Lion and the Baboon have a boxing match, and the Lion ends in jail. In the latter part of this text, all pretense of the jungle is given up. In the last few lines, the Lion becomes "Billy Lion," the protagonist of the "Stackolee" story, and this fight may indeed have come from another 'bully' story, and have been an autonomous toast just added to this story for interest.

The texts of "The Monkey and the Baboon" also, for the most part, are similar. They can only be understood by a knowledge of the strategy of the games of pool and coon-can. The pool-game speaks for itself, the object obviously being to sink as many balls in their numerical order as possible without missing. To have a 'run' like that described in this game is truly phenomenal, as is only seen among the 'sharks.' Cooncan is a rummy game that is a favorite among the Negroes in this area (and throughout the South). It is a very complicated game, and as it is amply described in Hoyle I will omit such description here. The dialogue that surrounds the cooncan game is the sort that one can hear during any game among the Negro. It is an attempt to 'one-up' or 'out-psych' the opposing players. For a fuller description of this type badinage, see Chapter Two.

## A

## 1

Deep down in the jungles, way back in the sticks,  
The animals had formed a game called 'pool.' The  
baboon was a slick.

Now a few stalks shook, and a few leaves fell.  
Up popped the monkey one day, 'bout sharp as hell.  
He had a one-button roll, two-button satch.  
You know, one them boohipper coats with a belt in  
the back.

The baboon stood with a crazy rim,  
Charcoal grey vine, and a stingy brim,  
Hand full of dimes, pocket full of herbs,  
Eldorado Cadillac parked at the curb.  
He said, "Mr. Monkey, if it ain't my friend.  
We gonna play some 'Georgia Skin.'"  
"Raise! That ain't my game.  
Me and you can play some 'Cooncan.'"  
"Why should we argue and fight, acting like a fool.  
We'll just step in the hall and shoot a game of pool."  
So the baboon reached over to break the rack.  
The monkey kicked him square in the ass and he snatched  
him back.

He said, "Unh, unh, not here."  
So they was fussing and fighting over who was going to  
make the break.  
The giraffe was the houseman. You know naturally he  
had a stake.  
So he said, "We'll flip for it."  
So he flipped a coin about three feet in the air.  
The baboon was itching to try to make a pin.  
It was a two-headed coin, the monkey had to win.  
The monkey grabbed a stick, and the baboon snatched  
the chalk,  
And around the table them two motherfuckers started  
to walk.  
The monkey broke the rack. Got the one, two, three, four,  
and five.

Brought tears in the baboon's eyes.  
Now the six, seven, and eight  
Was a natural take.  
The nine and ten  
Flew right in.  
The eleven ball crossed corner, the twelve just as well.  
The thirteen in the side pocket, combination, like a bat  
out of hell.

Baboon jumped up, said, "It's a god-damn shame,  
I can't beat this ugly motherfucker in no kind of game.  
We gonna play some 'Cooncan.'"

The monkey told the baboon, "You know Brother Buzzard who live across the creek?"

He said, "I cooncanned him for a solid week."

He said, "But you ain't gonna act right,

'Cause it took all me and my blade could do to keep out of a fight.

But you go find yourself a stump to fit your rump,

I'ma cooncan you tonight till your asshole jump."

He said, "I'ma hold my jacks, spread my queens,

I'ma do switching in this old fucked-up deck the world's never seen.

I'ma hold my deuces, lay down my treys,

Get down on your motherfucking ass in a thousand ways."

He said, "Now skip Mr. Rabbit, hop Mr. Bear,

Look's shitty, but there's 'leven of them there."

(13) 4/7/59

2

Deep down in the jungles, way back in the sticks,  
The animals had formed a game called 'pool' and the baboon was a slick.

Now a few stalks shook and a few leaves fell

When up popped a monkey one day, 'bout sharp as hell.

With a one-button roll, two-button satch,

Boolhipper coat with a belt in the back.

The baboon said, "Well, Mr. Monkey, if it ain't my friend.

Let's play us some Georgia Skin."

He said, "Raise, motherfucker, you know that ain't my game.

He said, "Why should we stand and hollar like a fool.

Let's step in the hall and play a game of pool."

The baboon reached over to break the rack.

The monkey kicked him square in his ass and snatched him back.

He said, "Not here." Well, while they was ready to go to blows

And throwing punches all around the poolroom floor,

They was fussing and fighting over who was going to make the break,

The giraffe was the houseman, you know damn well he had a stake.

He said he'd flip a coin to flip for the break.

He flipped one about two feet in the air.

The baboon's inches was trying to make a pin.

There was two in the corner, the monkey had to win.

The monkey grabbed the stick, the baboon grabbed the chalk.

'Round the table them two ugly motherfuckers started to walk.

The monkey broke the rack; he go the one and the two.

And looked at me and you.  
 He dropped the three and four,  
 And looked out the door.  
 The five and six  
 Was a natural fix.  
 The seven and eight  
 Was a natural take.  
 The nine and ten  
 Flew right in.  
 The eleven ball crossed corners, twelve just as well;  
 Thirteen in combination in the side pocket like a bat  
 out of hell.  
 The baboon said, "Ain't this a motherfucking shame.  
 I can't beat this ugly motherfucker in no kind of game.  
 We gon' play some Cooncan.  
 The monkey looked at the baboon and said real sweet,  
 "You and me gonna walk 'cross the street.  
 Find yourself a rump to fit your stump  
 'Cause I'ma Cooncan you tonight till your asshole jump."  
 Said, "I'ma hold my deuces and dish my treys,  
 Get down on your dirty ass in a thousand ways.  
 I'ma hold my jacks and spread my queens.  
 Put a switch in this fucked-up deck, this world has  
 never seen.  
 He said, "Hop, Mr. Rabbit, skip Mr. Bear.  
 I know you think its shitty, but there's eleven of 'em  
 there."

(13) 3/60

## B

Deep down in the jungle way back in the sticks  
 The animals had a pool room and the baboon was a slick.  
 But they didn't know, deep down in the jungle in the  
 coconut grove  
 Live a little pimp monkey, you could tell by the clothes  
 he wore.  
 He had a camel-hair benny with the belt in the back,  
 Had a pair of nice shoes, and a pair of blue slacks.  
 He said he think he'd take a little stroll.  
 In just a few minutes he passed the pool-room door.  
 Now the baboon was setting on the stool  
 Waiting for the next damn fool.  
 Celery seen, celery done,  
 Who wanted to try Brother Devil one?  
 He said, "Come here, Mr. Monkey, you come here late.

But you're just in time for one more break."

The monkey said, "Houseman, I want you to hold my gun. I don't want to kill the motherfucker, I just want to shoot him one."

He said, "And by the way, while your at that, I want you to chalk my cue."

If I break this motherfucker, there's gonna be a tip for you."

He broke the balls and ran the one, two, and three.

He said, "Hold this cue stick while I go and pee."

He pissed on the table, he shit on the floor.

Came back and run the three and four.

Now he shot the balls, and he shot'em all, and turned around and shot the five.

Brought hot, scalding water from the baboon's eyes.

He banked the six and seven cross-side.

He took the motherfucking eight for a god-damn ride.

He shot the nine, he shot the ten.

He only had five more balls to shoot on in.

He shot the 'leven, he shot the twelve.

By that time, the baboon said, "To hell! Go to hell!"

He said, "Wait a minute, rack the ball."

He said, "Do you know how to coon?"

"Get you a rump to fit your stump

And I'll coon you till your ass-hole jump."

The monkey said, "Well, you ain't saying a thing."

So they started out. Brother Baboon said, "Monkey, when

I fall out on you I'm gonna spread four queens

And this a king."

Well, the game's going 'long all right, he made a mistake.

And that's when this monkey made a hell of a break.

Now there was a spider on the wall, with a fly beside his head.

He saw that break and he dropped dead.

He said, "Jump, Brother Rabbit, and leap Brother Bear, It may look lite shit, but there's 'leven cards there."

He said, "Somebody go get this motherfucker's wife,

'Cause I'm just about to win his god-damned life.

I don won all his silver, done won all his gold.

If we play long enough, win his god-damned soul."

(17)

# C

Deep down in the jungle, way back in the sticks,

That's where the baboon was a slick.

Now a few stalks shook, and a few leaves fell,

And up jumped the monkey, sharp as hell.



Had a one-button roll, two-button satch.  
 You know, one of them boolhipper coats, you know, with  
 a buckle in the back.

There was Mr. Baboon, he was sharp as a pin.

Charcoal gray vine with a stingy brim.

He had a pocket full of money, handful of herbs,

Eldorado Cadillac parked at the curb.

He said, "Mr. Monkey, if it ain't my friend.

Come on, Dad, let's play some 'Georgia Skin.'"

He said, "Raise, motherfucker, that ain't my game.

Come on, let's play some 'Cooncan.'

He said, "No, don't be no fool.

Let's go in the hall and play a game of pool."

They was fussing and fighting 'bout who was going to  
 make the break.

They asked the houseman, naturally he had a stake.

The monkey grabbed the stick, and the baboon grabbed  
 the chalk.

Around the table them two motherfuckers started to walk.

Now the monkey reached back

He broke the rack.

He sank the one, two, three, four, and five.

He brought tears to the baboon's eyes.

The six, seven, and eight

Was a natural take.

The nine and ten

Flew right in.

He played the 'leven in the corner and the twelve just  
 as well,

Put the thirteen ball in the side, like a bat out  
 of hell.

Knocked his stick on the floor,

Said, "Count 'em house, you'll find well over sixty-four."

The baboon said, "God damn, I can't beat this man in no  
 kind of game.

Come on, let's play some Cooncan."

He said, "You know Brother Rabbit across the creek?

Well, I cooncaned him for a solid week.

But you ain't gonna act right,

'Cause it took all me and my blade to do to keep out of  
 a fight.

Come on. I'ma find a stump to fit your rump

And I'ma cooncan you till your asshole jump."

He said, "I'm gonna spread my deuces, and dish my treys,

I'ma get down on you in all kinds of ways.

I'ma spread my jacks and dish my queens,

I'ma put a switch in the deck the world never seen.

So hop Mr. Rabbit and skip Mr. Bear.

It's gonna look mighty shady, but there's 'leven of  
 them there."

If anybody asks you who pulled that toast,  
Just tell them old bullshitting Snell, from coast-  
to-coast.

I live on Shotgun Avenue, Tommygun Drive,  
Pistol Apartment, and Room 45.

(28) 3/23/59

(To be said at end of "Monkey and Baboon" sometimes.)

Now I was walking through the jungle the other day, come  
along a coconut tree

That old dirty motherfucking baboon tried to shit on me.  
So I looked up and said, "Raise, Do you know what you're  
doing?"

He said, "Dig, kid, did you see me lose my money the  
other day?"

I said, "Yeah." He said, "Don't come fucking me in that  
kind of way."

He said, "Furthermore, due to that you're a slick, and  
I'm supposed to be smart,

You knowed I was going to shit, 'cause you heard me when  
I fart."

(13) 4/8/59

### The Lion and the Monkey

A

Down in the jungle near a dried-up creek,

The signifying monkey hadn't slept for a week

Remembering the ass-kicking he had got in the past

He had to find somebody to kick the lion's ass.

Said the signifying monkey to the lion that very same day,

"There's a bad motherfucker heading your way.

The way he talks about you it can't be right,

Am I know when you two meet there going to be a fight.

He said he fucked your cousin, your brother, and your niece,

And he had the nerve enough to ask your grandmom for a piece."

The lion said, "Mr. Monkey, if what you say isn't true  
about me,

Bitch, I'll run your ass up the highest tree."

The monkey said, "Now look, if you don't believe what I say,  
Go ask the elephant. He's resting down the way."

The lion let out with a mighty rage,  
 Like a young cocksucker blowing his gauge.  
 He ran through the jungle with a mighty breeze,  
 Kicking gorillas in the ass and knocking giraffes to  
 their knees.

Then he saw the elephant resting under his tree.  
 He said, "Get up, motherfucker, you and me.  
 The elephant looked up from the corner of his eye  
 And said, "Scram, chickenshit, fuck with someone  
 your size."

The lion squatted and made a pass.  
 The elephant ducked and knocked him flat on his ass.  
 Then he jumped in his stomach and stepped in his face.  
 And tore his ass hole clean out of place.  
 He mashed in his face like a forty-four,  
 Plucked out his eyes and dared him to roar.  
 The lion crawled through the jungle more dead than alive,  
 And swore to stop the monkey from signifying.  
 Now that's when the monkey really started his shit.  
 "Jive-king of the jungle, ain't you a bitch,  
 All swelled up like you got the seven-year itch.  
 You was up there all jobbing and jiving and swinging  
 your arms

While the elephant was hitting you like a young King Kong.  
 Going around talking about you can't be beat.  
 Well I want you to know that me and my wife had a ring-  
 side seat.

And another thing. Every time me and my old lady try to  
 get a little bit,  
 You come 'round here with that roaring and shit.  
 Git away from my tree before I pee."  
 The lion looked up and said, "Mr. Monkey, if you piss on me  
 While under your tree I pass,  
 I'll climb that tree and kick your motherfucking ass."  
 The monkey said, "Mister Lion, if I piss on you while  
 you pass,

You'll climb this tree and kiss my ass."  
 The monkey started jumping up and down.  
 His foot missed the limb and his ass hit the ground.  
 Faster than a streak of lightning and a bolt of heat,  
 The lion was on the monkey with all four feet.  
 Then the monkey's wife started her shit,  
 "See that, monkey, that's what you git  
 Going around signifying and shit."  
 The monkey said, "Now look! You shut up, because there's  
 one thing I'll never be able to see.  
 That's how I leaped and missed a whole damn tree.  
 Bitch, I believe you pushed me."  
 The monkey looked up with tears in his eyes  
 And said, "I'm sorry, Mister Lion, I apologize."  
 The lion said, "There ain't no use for you to be crying,  
 Because I'm going to stop you from signifying.

Now before I put you away to rest,  
 I want to hear your dying request."  
 The monkey said, "Get your motherfucking feet out my eyes  
 and my nuts out of this sand,  
 And I'll wrestle your ass all over this land."  
 Then when the lion got ready to fight  
 The monkey jumped up and went clean out of sight.  
 But in the distance you could hear the monkey say,  
 "As long as these weeds and green grass grow,  
 I'm going to be around to signify some more.  
 And other thing, Mr. Lion, you ain't no hell by the way  
 you creep,  
 'Cause I know where three elephants sleep."

(28) 3/23/59

B

Deep down in the jungle so they say  
 There's a signifying motherfucker down the way.  
 There hadn't been no disturbin' in the jungle for quite  
 a bit,  
 For up jumped the monkey in the tree one day and laughed,  
 "I guess I'll start some shit."  
 Now the lion come through the jungle one peaceful day,  
 When the signifying monkey stopped him and this what he  
 started to say.  
 He said, "Mr. Lion," he said, "A bad-assed motherfucker  
 down your way."  
 He said, "Yeah! The way he talks about your folks is a  
 certain shame.  
 I even heard him curse when he mentioned your grandmother's  
 name."  
 The lion's tail shot back like a forty-four,  
 When he went down the jungle in all uproar.  
 He was pushing over mountains, knocking down trees.  
 In the middle of a pass he met an ape.  
 He said, "I ought to beat your ass just to get in shape."  
 He met the elephant in the shade of a tree.  
 "Come on long-eared motherfucker, it's gonna be you and me."  
 Now the elephant looked up out the corner of his eye,  
 Said, "Go on bird-shit, fight somebody your size."  
 Then the lion jumped back and made a hell of a pass.  
 The elephant side-stepped and kicked him dead on his ass.  
 Now he knocked in his teeth, fucked-up his eye,  
 Kicked in his ribs, tied-up his face,  
 Tied his tail in knots, stretched his tail out of place.  
 Now they fought all that night, half the next day.  
 I'll be damned if I can see how the lion got away.

When they was fussing and fighting, lion came back through  
 the jungle more dead than alive,  
 When the monkey started some more of that signifying jive.  
 He said, "Damn, Mr. Lion, you went through here yesterday,  
 the jungle rung.  
 Now you come back today, damn near hung."  
 He said, "Now you come by here when me and my wife trying  
 to get a little bit,  
 T<sup>t</sup>ell me that 'I rule' shit."  
 He said, "Shut up, motherfucker, you better not roar  
 'Cause I'll come down there and kick your ass some more."  
 The monkey started getting panicked and jumped up and down,  
 When his feet slipped and his ass hit the ground.  
 Like a bolt of lightning, a stripe of white heat,  
 The lion was on the monkey with all four feet.  
 The monkey looked up with a tear in his eyes,  
 He said, "Please Mr. Lion, I apologize."  
 He said, "You lemme get my head out the sand  
 Ass out the grass, I'll fight you like a natural man."  
 The lion jumped back and squared for a fight.  
 The motherfucking monkey jumped clear out of sight.  
 He said, "Yeah, you had me down, you had me last,  
 But you left me free, now you can still kiss my ass."  
 Again he started getting panicked and jumping up and down.  
 His feet slipped and his ass hit the ground.  
 Like a bolt of lightning, stripe of white heat,  
 Once more the lion was on the monkey with all four feet.  
 Monkey looked up again with tears in his eyes.  
 He said, "Please, Mr. Lion, I apologize."  
 Lion said, "Ain't gonna be no apologizing.  
 I'ma put an end to his motherfucking signifying."  
 Now when you go through the jungle, there's a tombstone  
 so they say,  
 'Here the Signifying Monkey lay,  
 Who got kicked in the nose, fucked-up in the eyes,  
 Stomped in the ribs, kicked in the face,  
 Drove backwards to his ass-hole, knocked his neck out  
 of place."  
 That's what I say.

(13) 4/7/59

C

Deep down in the jungle where the coconut grows  
 Lives a pimp little monkey, you could tell by the clothes  
 he wore.  
 He had a camel-hair benny with a belt in the back,  
 Had a pair of nice shoes and a pair of blue slacks.

Now his clothes were cute little things,  
 Was wearing a Longine watch and a diamond ring.  
 He says he think he'd take a stroll  
 Down by the water hole.  
 And guess who he met? Down there was Mr. Lion.  
 The monkey started that signifying.  
 He said, "Mr. Lion, Mr. Lion, I got something to tell  
 you today."  
 He said, "This way this motherfucker been talking 'bout you  
 I know you'll sashay.  
 (He told the lion)  
 He said, "Mr. Lion, the way he talking 'bout your mother,  
 down your cousins,  
 I know damn well you don't play the dozens.  
 He talking your uncle and your aunt's a damn shame.  
 Called your father and your mother a whole lot of names.  
 I would'a fought the motherfucker but looked at him with a  
 tear in my eye.  
 He's a big motherfucker, he's twice my size."  
 The lion looked down with a tear in his eye,  
 Said, "Where's this big motherfucker that's twice my size?"  
 That little monkey said, "I'll show you the way."  
 He went down and the elephant was standing by a tree,  
 And the lion said, "Hey, motherfucker, I hear you been  
 looking for me."  
 Elephant looked at the lion and said,  
 "Go on chicken-shit, pick on somebody your size."  
 The lion made a roar.  
 The elephant side-stepped and kicked his ass on the floor.  
 The lion looked up with a tear in his eyes.  
 Says, "I'm gonna beat you, motherfucker, though your twice  
 my size."  
 He looked back and squared off to fight.  
 The elephant kicked his ass clean out of sight.  
 Came back for ride or roar.  
 Elephant stomped his ass clean on the floor.  
 The elephant looked about, said, "What the fuck is this?"  
 The lion said, "You know you's a bad motherfucker, put up  
 your fists."  
 They fought three days, and they fought three nights.  
 I don't see how in hell the lion got out of that fight.  
 Coming back through the jungle more dead than alive,  
 Here goes the monkey in the tree with that same signifying.  
 He said, "Look at you, you god-damn chump.  
 Went down in the jungle fucking with that man  
 And got your ass blashed and drug in the sand.  
 You call yourself a real down king,  
 But I found you ain't a god-damned thing.  
 Get from underneath this god-damned tree  
 'Cause I feel as though I've got to pee."  
 The lion looked up, said

"That's all right, Mr. Monkey, if that's the way you want to play  
 The sun's gonna shine in your ugly ass some day."  
 Monkey looked down, said, "Long as the trees grow tall,  
 the grass grows green,  
 You's the dumbest motherfucker the jungle's ever seen."  
 Said, "You motherfucker, I heard you down there pleading  
 for your life.  
 At the very same time I had my dick in your wife.  
 You motherfucker, when that man knocked you over the hill,  
 I was gonna throw a party 'cause I thought your ass got  
 killed."  
 The lion strode through the jungle to pick himself up.  
 The monkey called him back, said,  
 "Hey, you motherfucker, and oh, by the way,  
 Don't you come 'round here with that hoorah shit,  
 Everytime me and my wife get ready to get a little bit."  
 Monkey started jumping up and down.  
 The left foot slipped and his ass hit the ground.  
 Like a bolt of lightning, like a streak of heat,  
 The lion was on him with all four feet.  
 Monkey look up with a tear in his eye,  
 Said, "Mr. Lion, I'se just kidding, but I apologize."  
 He said, "No, you're a signifying motherfucker and you  
 always will.  
 You gonna fuck around some day and get somebody killed."  
 The monkey jumped back, and said, "Get your feet off my  
 chest and my head out the sand  
 And I'll get up and beat you like a natural-born man."  
 Now the lion squared back, he was ready to fight,  
 But the poor little monkey jumped clean out of sight.  
 He said, "I told you, long as the trees grewed tall, grass  
 grewed green,  
 You's the dumbest motherfucker the jungle ever seen.  
 Dumb motherfucker, I done tricked you again."  
 So the Lion said, "All right, Mr. Monkey, if that's the way  
 you want to play.  
 The sun's gonna shine in your ass some day."  
 Now what do you think? Down on Rampart Street  
 Who did Mr. Lion chance to meet--  
 The signifying monkey.  
 He stomped to the right and he stomped to the left.  
 Stomped the poor monkey clean to death.  
 Now I know some people think there is where the story ends.  
 But I'm gonna show you when it just begins.  
 You know how news travels in the jungle far and fast,  
 When it reached the monkey's baboon cousins at last.  
 He looked in the mirror with a tear in his eyes,  
 He says, "I'll get this motherfuck, he's just about my size."  
 He told his main whore he had to go,  
 Down to the coconut grove to the water hole.

He packed up his whiskey and his bottle of gin,  
 He had a long ways to go, but a short time to make it in.  
 Coming through the jungle, swinging on the limbs,  
 Come the baddest motherfucker the jungle ever seen.  
 So by the time he got down to the coconut grove,  
 All the animals having a party 'round the water hole.  
 So Brother Lion was there, him and his wife,  
 When the baboon came up. In his hand he was carrying  
 his knife.

He said, "Hey there, bad motherfucker, you did my cousin in.  
 Now I come down here to fight, to do you in."

So the Lion said, "Look here, Mr. Baboon, I don't want  
 to fight,

I want you to get your ass out of my sight."

He said, "Tomorrow I want you to come down here early in  
 the morning,

And be ready to fight.

So the lion went on home, preparing for the next day.

He knowed he had to fight, he had to fight in a hell of  
 a way.

So now coming back to the fight, turn back down to the  
 coconut grove.

Who was standing there looking so outright and fine,

But old brother Monkey and Billy Lion.

While over there with real bad sight,

They naturally had to pick on Brother Bear to referee  
 the fight.

So he introduced them.

He said, "In this corner we got Brother Lion,

He been bit by a tiger, scratched by a lion,

Tied in a barrel of lye, shot in the ass with a forty-five.

He's a bad motherfucker, but he don't want to die.

And in this corner we got Brother Baboon.

So far he's done licked every ass from earth to the moon.

He's better known as Big Jim,

He's the baddest motherfucker that ever swing from a limb."

So when Brother Bear jumped back off the grass,

Signal for the two motherfuckers to tear their ass.

Now they begin to fight and they begin to scuffle.

Soon the lion's jaw begin to ruffle.

After awhile I saw a mighty right to the lion's chin.

And everybody thought the lion had come out to an end.

But now when the bell rang for the first round,

The lion went back to his corner.

In his corner they were using Hadacol,

While in the baboon's corner they were saying a prayer to  
 the Lord.

Everybody thought that Big Jim was through.

But when they came back out, that's when it turned to.

Brother Lion hit Brother Baboon to the face, one to the ribs,

Kicked him in the mouth, bust all his jibs.



Hit him in the ribs, hit him in the head.  
 That time the Lion fell out for dead,  
 Brother Lion's wife jumped up in a mighty roar,  
 Said, "You just knocked my husband down to the floor."  
 She said, "I'ma have you put in jail.  
 And there ain't nobody here gonna go you bail.  
 So the monkey is standing on the corner with the same  
 old signifying,  
 Said, "Don't worry, I got a friend and his name is  
 Billy Lion.  
 He's the richest man 'round here in town. He'll get  
 you out."  
 But where it ends, the baboon's still in jail,  
 And the monkey not trying to get a dime to go his  
 cousin's bail.

(17) 9/7/50

D

The monkey said to the lion, one bright summer day,  
 "There's a big motherfucker across the way,  
 You and him will never be right  
 Because I know when you get there, there'll be a hell of  
 a fight.  
 Now here is something I really has to say.  
 He talks about your mother in a bitching way.  
 He called her a no-good bitch and he meant it for a fight.  
 You ask my opinion, I'll say, 'Man, it wasn't right.'"  
 Off drove the lion in a terrible rage,  
 Creating a breeze which shook the trees  
 And knocked the giraffe to his knees.  
 He confronted the elephant up under the tree,  
 And said, "Motherfucker, it's you or me."  
 He drove at the elephant and made his pass.  
 The elephant knocked him flat on his ass.  
 He kicked and stomped him all in his face.  
 He busted two ribs and pulled his tail out of place.  
 They cursed and fought damn near all day.  
 I still don't see how that lion got away.  
 He dragged himself back, more dead than alive,  
 When the monkey started his signifying.  
 "Well, I be damned, kid, you don't look so well.  
 Looks to me like you've been catching hell.  
 When you left here the whole forest rung.  
 Now you come back damn near hung.  
 That elephant sure kicked the shit out of your ass,  
 But that bad bad cocksucker sure put you in your class.

You've got more scratches on your ass than a dog with the  
 seven-year itch.  
 You say you're King of the Jungle, now ain't that a bitch.  
 Every night when I'm trying to steal a bit  
 Here you come with your ratcoon shit.  
 Now motherfucker, if you make another roar  
 I'll jump down and kick your ass some more."  
 The monkey laughed and jumped up and down.  
 He missed a limb and his big ass hit the ground.  
 Like a bolt of lightning or a flash of heat,  
 The lion hit the monkey with all four feet.  
 The monkey screamed and rubbed his eyes,  
 And said, "Please, Mr. Lion, I apologize."  
 "Shut up, motherfucker, and stop your crying,  
 'Cause I'm gonna kick you ass for signifying."  
 The monkey's last words as he was dying,  
 "I tore my ass by signifying."  
 Now the monkey is dead and in his grave.  
 No more meddling will he crave.  
 On his tombstone, these words are wrote,  
 "He's dead as he lived, by his signifying shit,  
 Now take my warning and stay in your class,  
 Or you'll get knocked right square on your ass.

(8) 3/22/59

### Squad Twenty-two

Judging by the streets mentioned in this toast, this is a local  
 production. South and Lombard Streets are the two major east-west  
 arteries in the neighborhood.

The attitude toward the police expressed here is the prevalent  
 one among the Negroes of this area. Due to a long history of very bad  
 incidents, there is much antagonism between the police and the inhabi-  
 tants of the neighborhood.

I ran over to Lombard Street to get my gat.  
 I ran back to South Street, put on my hat.  
 While I was walking along who did I run into but a little  
 old boy who was hold a ten-spot in his hand.

So I grabbed that motherfucker and away I flew,  
 And guess who I run into?  
 Those bad motherfuckers from Squad Twenty-two.  
 Now in the back was my man.  
 He didn't even raise his hat or tip his hand.  
 So they put me in the wagon and they took me on down  
 to the county jail.  
 I didn't have a punk, fag, or sissy to go my bail.  
 So a guy in the cell told me the thing to do,  
 Was to get in tight with the captain of Squad Twenty-two.  
 I talked my shit and I talked it well.  
 He let me out of jail, so I flew home like a bat out  
 of hell.  
 Now I run back to South Street to put down my gat,  
 And back over to Lombard Street to put down my hat.  
 Now I takes the short-cut home and jumps into bed,  
 And this is what the rotten bitch I live with said,  
 Said, "Charley dear, wonderful one,  
 While you was gone I dreamt you got shot in the ass by  
 a big gun.  
 And by the way, the man that was carrying the gun was  
 from Squad Twenty-two.  
 Now my blood began to boil, my ass began to itch.  
 I jumped up and shot that rotten bitch.  
 Now I know you fellows think that's the wrong thing to do,  
 But I don't want to hear another motherfucking word about  
 Squad Twenty-two.

(17)

### A Hard-Luck Story

This type of toast arises out of a very common social situation.  
 Among the very poor, especially those who live from relief check to relief check, or from payday to payday, always just a little in debt, it is a common situation to be asked to lend some small amount such as a dime. Being one of the 'softest touches' in the neighborhood, we were often 'hit' by such pleas, many dimes and quarters being surrendered--most of which never found their way back to us.

## A

Look out, bitch, and don't say a word,  
 'Cause I'm beating your ass about some shit I heard.  
 Long time now you been pulling this shit.  
 I'ma give you an ass-whipping you never will forget.  
 I send you to the store ask for butter, you bring back lard.  
 I'll lay beside you, my dick won't get hard.  
 You got a nerve to ask me for a dime.  
 You're kinda pigeon-toed, knock-kneed and blind.  
 Receiving the call off of each and every line,  
 That your grandmammy's pussy done run your grandpappy's line.  
 You gotta nerve to ask me for a dime.  
 You got to walk the water, like Christ walked the sea,  
 Hold both thunder and lightning and bring it back to me.  
 Then I'll introduce you to a friend of mine.  
 He might lend you a nickel, he won't lend you a dime.  
 By that you know, you ain't no more bitch of mine.

(28) 3/13/59

## B

I was once a man with plenty of wealth,  
 Going 'round showing my friends plenty good time.  
 And so one day when I realized I didn't have a thing,  
 I decided to walk down the street and ask a friend of mine,  
 To loan me a dime.  
 He said, "You're a friend, a friend it's true  
 But to get one of these thin dimes, here's what you're gonna  
 have to do."  
 He said, "You have to walk the waters, like Jesus walked the  
 sea.  
 Got to hold both thunder and lightning and bring it back  
 to me."  
 He said, "Put the Empire State Building down in a sack.  
 Jump up a camel's ass and snatch the hump out of that mother-  
 fucker's back."  
 He said, "When you receive a letter from your grandfather,  
 saying your grandmother's pussy's running blind (?)  
 Your mother's sick and your father's dying,  
 Then I'll introduce you to a friend of mine  
 Who might loan you a nickel, but not a dime.

(13)

## C

When I was rich, I was right.  
 I used to spend my money just like I was white.  
 One day I got broke.  
 Not a friend did I have.  
 But you know what all good hustlers do.  
 They always keep a quarter too.  
 So I was walking down Rampail Street,  
 When two chocke whores I chanced to meet.  
 They said, "Hello, Charley, I haven't seen you in a  
 mighty long time.  
 Stand me maybe a dime?"  
 I said, "Before I give you a dime, this is what you got  
 to do.  
 You got to go up on the Empire State Building and jump  
 clean down on your head.  
 Then say, 'Charley boy, I ain't dead.'  
 You got to swim a ocean, 'round and around.  
 From the Pacific, you got to swim the deep sea channel and  
 tell me you ain't drowned.  
 You got to eat tenlinks of cat-shit, and you better not frown.  
 You got to go way up high,  
 And find the rock that David killed Goliath,  
 If you do all this in a half-an-hour time,  
 Might loan you a nickel but not a god-damn dime."

(17) 9/7/59

The next three toasts are further 'bad man' stories, but of a  
 different sort than "Stackolee." These are the stories, not bullies  
 fighting each other but of modern criminals outwitting the police or  
 dying at their hands. Even when they do die, they do it with a kind  
 of glory, boasting as they go. And in many ways, we could think of  
 these toasts as extended boasts.

Just as in so many other aspects of the neighborhood, one can  
 see here the strong effects of popular entertainment mediums.  
 Dillinger, Slick Willie Sutton, the Dalton Brothers, the James  
 Brothers, Geronimo are the heroes of these pieces. And the Jesse

James portrayed here is not the modern Robin Hood of the ballad; he is just as mean as any of the others.

Many of the lines will be familiar. Jesse winds up at the same bar at which "Stackolee" killed Billy, and he seems to be uttering the same dialogue. Both the "MacDaddy" and the "Big Man" toasts contain the stock courtroom scene. The final lines of "MacDaddy" are also associated with the "Stackolee" tradition.

"The Big Man" may be a strictly local toast, as evidenced by the reference to Fifth and South. 'Kid' claimed to have written this one, but he claimed to have written "The Titanic," also, as well as others.

#### The Big Man

I met a cute little girl, she took my heart,  
 So I decided my life I wanted to share a part.  
 Now the fellows told me, "Now look here, Kid  
 She wasn't no good for me."  
 I didn't care what the boys had to say,  
 I went down to the judge to read the matrimony one day.  
 So I come off from work and I was tired.  
 I come in the house and I see my best friend laying my  
 my bed inside.  
 So I shot him in the head and she ran out down the  
 street.  
 I cut her in the throat, chopped off her feet.  
 So 'round about two o'clock that morning, I was standing  
 on Fifth and South,  
 My man walked up saying, "Kid, is you the one that  
 busted your lady in the mouth?"  
 I said, "That's me." He said, "Come on, I got a warrant  
 for your arrest."  
 He just read a few lines, then he stopped, and he  
 wouldn't say a word.

Now tomorrow morning, after the judge read it,  
 you heard.  
 So the judge looked down at me, my wife started  
 to crying,  
 Mother-in-law jumped up, she began to shout,  
 My lawyer said, "Sit down, bitch you don't know what the  
 trial's about."  
 The judge told me, he said, "Kid, I'ma give you some time.  
 Here go fifty-five years to get that whooping off you mind."  
 I said, "Fifty-five years ain't no time,  
 I got a brother in Sing Sing doing ninety-nine.  
 If you think that's a kick, here's a better.  
 I got an uncle in Alcatraz waiting for the chair."  
 So he took me up and he gave me cell number 32.  
 So right up 'bout four, five years had passed,  
 When I got a letter from that old nasty bitch.  
 She said, "Kid, I came to your trial,  
 Now I didn't come there to place a bet.  
 Just came to see how much time your ass was going to get."  
 She said, "Things out here sure is hard.  
 I'm out here on the street, trying to make a bite,  
 Fucking eating chicken every night."  
 So it got on my nerves, made me mad,  
 So I got my pencil and paper, my scratch pad.  
 I wrote her back a letter, and here's what I said.  
 "For your dirtiness towards me that can't be accounted for.  
 May the crabs grow 'round your body and start to eat.  
 May the lice grow up around your back, eat down to your  
 feet.  
 May you get corroded, and blood run from your nose.  
 Then before your life's a wreck, may you fall backwards to  
 your asshole.

Your motherfucking man."

"Kid"

### The Great MacDaddy

I was standing on the corner, wasn't even shooting crap,  
 When a policeman came by, picked me up on a lame rap.  
 He took me to the jailhouse, 'bout quarter past eight.  
 That morning, 'bout ten past nine,  
 Turnkey came down the line.  
 Later on, 'bout ten past ten,  
 I was facing the judge and twelve other men.  
 He looked own on me, he said,  
 "You're the last of the bad.

Now Dillinger, Slick Willie Sutton, all them fellows is  
gone,  
Left you, the Great MacDaddy to carry on."  
He said, "Now we gonna send you up the way. Gonna send  
you up the river.  
Fifteen to thirty, that's your retire."  
I said, "Fifteen to thirty, that ain't no time.  
I got a brother in Sing Sing doing ninety-nine."  
Just then my sister-in-law jumped up, she started to cry.  
I throwed her a dirty old rag to wipe her eye.  
My mother-in-law jumped, she started to shout.  
"Sit down, bitch, you don't even know what the trial's  
about."  
"Pon her arm she had my six-button benny.  
Said, "Here you are MacDaddy, here's your coat."  
I put my hand in my pocket and much to my surprise,  
I put my hand on two forty-fives.  
I throwed them on the judge and made my way to the door.  
As I was leaving, I tipped my hat to the pictures once  
more.  
Now outside the courtroom was Charcoal Brown.  
He was one of the baddest motherfuckers on this side  
of town.  
The juries left out, and the broads gave a scream,  
I was colling 'bout hundred-fifteen miles an hour in my  
own limousine.  
Rode here, rode there, to a little town called Sin.  
That's when the police moved in.  
We was fighting like hell till everything went black.  
One of those sneaky cops come up and shot me in the back.  
I've got a tombstone disposition, graveyard mind.  
I know I'm a bad motherfucker, that's why I don't mind  
dying.

(13)

### Jesse James

#### A

When the west was at its best  
And every time a locomotive hit a rup-stump bump  
And was unable to go any further  
Jess and his brother Frank would take over.  
"Frank, you guard the rear  
While I stomp the shit out the engineer."  
Man jumped up, said, "You can have my money, but spare  
my life."  
He said, "I don't want neither, I want to fuck your wife."  
He said, "Do this, well I'd rather be dead."



That's when Jesse sent four rockets through his head.  
 Fucked the wife, fucked her well,  
 Fucked her till her pussy swelled,  
 Got Frank to wipe the chicken-shit from around  
 his dick.

But don't get me wrong.  
 The James Brothers weren't the only badmen on the  
 train.

There was the Dalton Brothers, four of a kind.  
 They shot a motherfucker for a raggedy dime.  
 There was John Dillinger in the corner, counting  
 his gold.

He shot his motherfucker when he was ten years old.  
 There was a bad motherfucker in the corner we all  
 should know.

His name was Geronimo.

A man jumped up and said, "Call the Law."

Jesse sent two rockets through that motherfucker's  
 jaw.

He looked over at the conductor.

He said, "Conductor, don't you breathe or shit."

Conductor went to move, dead he lay.

Jesse dived out the window, swam through water, swam  
 through mud.

He was looking for the place they call the Bucket  
 of blood.

He went in the bar expecting to eat.

The bartender gave him a muddy glass of water and  
 fucked-up piece of meat.

He pulled out a gun, he shot the bartender from front  
 to back.

Lady came in, said, "Where's Pete?"

Said, "Pete's behind the bar, fast asleep."

She said, "Pete ain't dead, Pete ain't dead."

He said, "Just count the six bullets in that raggedy  
 motherfucker's head."

She said, "My son Pete's dead, I can't go on."

Jesse put his foot on her ass and aimed her for the door.

He punched and shot a cat.

Shot a dog from front to back.

He was in this bad old Texas town, where the dudes go  
 down.

"You just pack your rags and leave this town."

(20)

(couldn't remember rest)

## B

It was a nine o'clock jump  
 When the train hit the stump.  
 Jessie said, "Frank, you take the back and I'll take  
 the front."  
 Now on the train, there were bad cats on there,  
 From everywhere.  
 There was John Dillinger who was on the run.  
 Just broke jail with a wooden gun.  
 There was Pretty Boy Floyd, he wasn't nothing but a name.  
 He used to get all his money for old fucked-up dames.  
 Now there was Baby-Face Nelson, he was bad show.  
 He knocked down a police station, kicked in the president's  
 door.  
 Now on the train there was some bad motherfuckers on there  
 that everybody know.  
 Bad-ass Apache called Geronimo.  
 Jesse James said, "Everybody reach, and reach in the air.  
 And put that money in the sack here."  
 So he got to Geronimo, he slapped him in the mouth, ain't  
 that real bad.  
 He said, "Now I want everything you have."  
 Geronimo looked at him, said, "Jesse, you don't scare me,  
 not a damn bit.  
 And that's when Jesse put a 38 shell in his chest so hard  
 it made him shit.  
 Geronimo looked up, on his dying breath,  
 He said, "Jesse, you didn't have to act like that.  
 If you had asked real nice I'd put a dollar cue in that  
 old fucked-up hat."

(13) 9/4/59

The next two pieces are of the familiar pattern of the fornication contest. That this is common lore in the Anglo-American tradition, one need only glance at our only available collection of such lore, Count Vicarion's Book of Bawdy Ballads (Paris, 1956).

Schoolteacher Lulu and Crabeye Pete

Schoolteacher Lulu come to town,  
 Ninety-nine men couldn't fuck her down.  
 In that town lived Crabeye Pete.

Crab to his head and dick to his feet.  
 All the pimps and the conventionists were holding a  
 convention in town,  
 Betting that Grabeye Pete would fuck Lulu down;  
 They was hold a convention at Carnegie Hall,  
 Come one, come all.  
 Now they was standing around 'bout noon,  
 Here comes Pete from the greasy spoon.  
 Now they got on the ground, they begin to fuck,  
 And my man was pushing dick to her like a ten-ton truck.  
 Lulu threw the bulldog curve.  
 Pete held on but he lost his nerve.  
 Then she threw the bulldog twist.  
 Pete held on but he broke a motherfucking wrist.  
 They fucked and they fucked and they fucked and they  
 fucked  
 Pete was still trying to put that dick to her like a  
 ten-ton truck.  
 But when it was all over poor Pete was dead.  
 So we took Pete up on the mountain and buried him deep  
 in the sand.  
 And on his grave we bescribed, "Here Lies the World's  
 Greatest Fucking Man."

(17)

Now here's a story, a story of old,  
 When the men were men, and the women were bold.  
 It was back in a town that was peaceful and quiet  
 When one lonely night a man came walking down the street.  
 He had about a yard and a half of joint hanging down  
 by his feet.  
 He walked to the hotel, and he asked the fellow sitting  
 quiet,  
 "Pardon me, mister, is this where the broad named Big  
 Whore lays her head?"  
 He said, "Well, tell her I'll see her tomorrow morning at  
 O.K. Corral, we'll start our bread."  
 That morning about nine past nine, Butterbean Susie let  
 out a fart,  
 To let them know the fucking was to start.  
 Just then, 'bout ten past ten,  
 Everybody knowed the fucking was about to begin.  
 Just then the earth gave a quiver, the ground gave a crut,  
 Everybody in town knew Big Dick has busted his nut.  
 Big Whore Sue screamed and grabbed her head,  
 Big Dick wiped the blood off his dick, said,

"Get the bitch, 'cause this whore is dead."  
 He got up, put his thing down his pants, gently at ease,  
 Got up and wiped the dirt off his knees.  
 As he was strolling out of town, he tipped his hat,  
 He said, "I fucked many and I fucked 'em well,  
 But everyone I fucked have caught hell.

(13) 4/8/59

Now I was walking down the road one day 'cause things  
 was hard.  
 I was just looking for a motherfucking job.  
 I knocked on this here door,  
 And what do you think, here come a pretty little whore.  
 She had on a nice little evening gown.  
 She said, "What you doing, hanging around."  
 I said, "Well, Miss, I don't mean no harm."  
 I said, "I'm just coming 'round looking for a job."  
 She said, "Oh, a job."  
 She said, "Perhaps you could have the deed to my house or  
 the deed to my car.  
 The job I want you to do ain't too hard."  
 She said, "Come on and sit down over here."  
 I said, "Well would you tell me what might his here job be?"  
 She said, "Well, you got to get down on your knees  
 And eat this pussy like a rat eating cheese.  
 You got to get way down in it and blow it like Louis blow  
 his horn.  
 You got to peck all around, like a rooster pecking corn."  
 I said, "Hold it! Wait a minute bitch, your're talking  
 too fast.  
 The next thing you know, you'll have my foot in your ass."  
 I said, "I'm not a rooster, so I can't peck corn  
 And I ain't Louis, so go blow your own horn."

(17)

### The Freak's Ball

The next four rhymes are all versions of what is usually called  
 "The Freak's Ball" (i.e. a party held by homosexuals). It seems to

have wide currency among Negroes, as I have encountered two texts from Texas Negroes.

## A

Lucy Lacy fucked Dick Tracy and Tessy Trueheart had  
a fit.  
Now Bullshit Benny fucked B. O. Plenty and Gravel Gerty  
had a bowl of shit.  
Well the shit was so thick, it made Dracula sick  
And the walls were full of slime.  
While they was laughing and joking, the door flew open  
And in walked Frankenstein.  
He looked around to try his luck.  
Grabbed the shortest broad in the crowd and started  
to fuck.  
While he was twisting and twirling  
His hips hit the wall, his ass hit the ceiling,  
His tongue got hot, his head got stiff,  
His neck started to wobbling and then that was it.  
He looked around and he grabbed the smallest bitch in town.  
He said, "I'll tell you what to do.  
Now you put your left leg over my right shoulder,  
And your right leg over my left shoulder and wiggle your  
ass in time.  
'Cause I'm booty struck, and got to fuck  
And I got grinding on my mind.

(13)

## B

Call up fast-fucking Fanny  
To tell her gray-assed Mammy  
We gonna have a ball  
Down the bulldagger's hall.  
There's gonna be thirty-nine cockheads fried in snot,  
Two or three pickled dicks tied in a knot.  
There's gonna be long cock, short cock, cock without bone.  
You can fuck a cock, suck a cock, or leave a god damn  
cock alone.  
There was Gravel Gerty and in walked Frankenstein.  
He grabbed the littlest woman in the bunch.  
He said, "Put your left leg on my right shoulder, and  
wiggle your ass in time.  
'Cause I'm booty struck, and got to fuck, and got grinding  
on my mind.

(28) 3/23/59

## G

Tell Bulldagging Fanny  
 Tell her gray-assed Granny  
 Tell her no-good Mammy  
 That we're gonna have a ball  
 At the Bulldagger's Hall.  
 It was the first fuck fight  
 To broad daylight.  
 Without eating a bite.  
 Then we're gonna have breakfast.  
 I'm gonna have fried snot,  
 Roast cock,  
 Three pickled dicks tied in a knot.  
 Come 'long lunch, I don't want no collard greens.  
 Just a bowl of catshit, some muddy beans.

(13) 4/8/59

## D

Bullshitting Willie told cocksuckering Sammie,  
 To come on down and bring his motherfuckering mammie,  
 Come on down and don't be late,  
 We're gonna be there when the band starts playing.  
 Come on down and don't miss the fun,  
 We're going to be there when the band shits all over the  
 floor,  
 And the leader grabs his self a fat whore.  
 These old girls are going to fuck and fight  
 Till the broad daylight.  
 Tomorrow night at the cheap cocksucker's ball.

(27) from mss.

Jody the Grinder

Whether "Jody" as a character was invented by inhabitants of the  
 prisons or the Army, he is the man who is home sleeping with your wife.  
 Lomax (FSNA), 595, prints the song "Sound Off" with a Jody verse. This  
 song is often called "Jody's Song." For a jail-house mention, see  
 Library of Congress Record, AAFS L4, (A3), "Joe the Grinder." See other  
 Jody rhymes, pages 215 and 242.

Now in nineteen hundred and fourty-four  
 The World War Two was over for sure.  
 Now a two-timing bitch with an old-man overseas,  
 Said, "Wake up Jodie. Wake up, please.  
 This shit is over, Japan is fell."  
 Now Jodie woke up, his eyes all red.  
 He said, "What's that, whore, I just heard you said?"  
 She said, "Don't look at me like I did a crime.  
 You've heard me the first god-damn time."  
 He said, "No, that what your talking can't be right.  
 'Cause the last I heard, the Japanese had just begin  
 to fight."  
 She said, "There was a time the Japs wouldn't quit,  
 But Uncle Sam dropped an atomic bomb and changed all  
 that shit."  
 She said, "Wise up, honey, just don't you get mad.  
 I think it's time for you to pack your rags and find  
 another pad."  
 She said, "Anyway, see who's at the door."  
 "Knock, knock, I'm already in.  
 Take a shot of my bad-ass gin."  
 He said, "While I was overseas fighting the enemy, and  
 digging that salt,  
 You was taking my checks and cashing them and taking my  
 bitch to the Allotment Ball.  
 Now here's something I can't miss.  
 Take my motherfucking Longine off your wrist."  
 He said, "Hold it, motherfucker, don't start that talk-  
 ing that jive.  
 Let me throw you an introduction to my army forty-five.  
 What? Who am I? I know your name is Jodie the Grinder  
 and you don't give a damn.  
 But bitch, tell this no-good motherfucker just who I am.  
 "Well honey, if you must know."  
 Jodie Grimes, meet G.I. Joe."

(13) 4/7/59

This is the old bawdy song, "Ring Dang Doo" in corrupted form as  
 performed as a toast. For a bowdlerized text, see Brand, 81.

There was a girl named Jane  
 Who took this fellow  
 Down to the cellar  
 Fed him whiskey, wine and gin  
 And gave him a piece of that old pooh-pooh.

Her mother cried from within her bed,  
 Said, "Jane, what is this nasty thing you're doing.  
 You pack your rags and your bloomers too,  
 And you make your living off you old pooh-pooh.

Jane went to the big city,  
 She tacked a sign up on the door.  
 "Two cents a ride, four cents a trip"  
 They came in twos, they came in fours.  
 To be correct, they came in scores.  
 There even was a guy named Traps  
 Who had the claps,  
 The sips and the blue-balls, too.  
 He even got a piece of that old pooh-pooh.

When she died in Carnegie Hall  
 They pickled her ass in alcohol.  
 They paraded her cock on Fifth Avenue.  
 And that was the end of the old pooh-pooh.

(20)

Pardon me chicks, kats and hens,  
 No not now, I'll tell you when.  
 I am not at all trying to be real bold,  
 Because I just learned to rock and roll.

I also learned the latest Chinese hop,  
 Rattle, Shake, Crawl, and Flop.  
 Come on out and step over the floor,  
 And while the night is young let's hit the door.

I can even do the Norfolk dance.  
 Stand back chicks and see me prance.  
 And just to show you that I'm no hick,  
 Let me meet some real cute chick.

Now I will tell you the whole truth,  
 I come here looking for a chick named Ruth.  
 Move back your chairs and let everyone see,  
 That I can shake like a limb on a tree.

I dropped in here very full of pep  
 In order to do the hog-pen step.  
 That kat you see leaning against the wall,  
 Is not afraid the building will fall.



He sure does look like a very mean kat.  
 Standing there will make him really fat.  
 That kat sure is playing it cool.  
 You can see he ain't nobody's fool.

Sorry chicks, I got to run.  
 Goodnight, I sure had fun.  
 I'll be digging you again some time,  
 When I'm not so full of blackberry wine.

(29)

If you know a girl named Mabel,  
 Take her around to Jack's stable.  
 Tell her to stoop down slow and lay back fast  
 And give me that ass,  
 Because I am going to give it right back just like it  
     has high-power gas.  
 You are going to stay in this hay,  
 So keep cool, and listen to what I have to say.  
 Are you ready? Don't be afraid, I will do you no harm,  
 Because you are fresh off the farm.  
 Just rap your legs around my back,  
 And act like you are squeezing a cow's sack.  
 Have you ever been to Arkansaw?  
 Well, I am going to teach you how to screw like a  
     first-class whore.  
 I can tell what you ate  
 By my dick probing in your belly, and the head of my  
     dick is like a seeing-eye worm used for fish bait.

(27) from mss.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### TALES, ANECDOTES, JOKES

In discussing the tale among the northern urban Negro, we are confronted immediately with Richard Dorson's dictum on the subject:

Southern Negro lore had moved north indeed, but only with migrants cradled and nurtured in the yeasty Southern traditions, or with the few still-living children of slaves. Northern-born Negroes, growing up among cities and factories, supercilious toward their Southern brothers had severed and discarded their folk heritage, and new migrants grow farther from it as they take on Northern attitudes.<sup>1</sup>

It is quite true that the Negroes who have been born in Philadelphia, or reared here know little of the tradition of animal stories that has flourished among the Negro of the South. But judging by many of the stories presented here, there are many of the older stories which they have retained from their Southern forebears. "The Coon in the Box" is one of the oldest of the stories collected among the Negroes of this country, different versions being found in Harris' Uncle Remus collection and Jones' dialect stories from the Sea Islands, published in 1888. The preacher tale is not only one of the oldest type of tale to be found among the American Negro but it is of broad European provenance. This type of tale is to be found in abundance, at least among the Camingerly residents.

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<sup>1</sup>Dorson (NFIM), 18.

But as Dorson points out elsewhere, along with these older echoes, a new voice is heard in Negro narratives.

Unrecognized until very recently, a whole body of jests, some bitter, some mocking, some merely wry, have vented the hurt of colored Americans at their un-American treatment. These tales of protest frequently revolve about a generic character called "Colored Man," who is discomfited and humiliated by White Man, but whose very arrogance he can sometimes turn to account.<sup>2</sup>

The germ of such stories certainly existed in the old cycle of "Marster-John" stories, which often had John, the slave outwitting his master and either gaining his freedom, or getting approbation of his slothful work habits. The ones that Dorson mentions are direct descendants of this sort of narrative, for the Negro turns the white man to account through verbal tricks. There are a number of that sort of story in this collection, notably the ones included under "Chinaman, Jew, Colored Man." But we see a further development of this type, where "Colored Man" outwits the White Man, not by guile but rather by arrogance, and sudden and unexpected show of strength. This is an application of the shift in values that is outlined at some length in Chapter Three.

Whether it is due to the effect of the sermon (especially in the preacher stories), or to a love of rhyme and song in any form, many of these stories are close to the cante-fable form. Glimpses at earlier Negro collections, including ones from the West Indies, indicate that this is a common characteristic of Negro tales, and probably comes from

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<sup>2</sup>Dorson (AF), 182-3.

Africa. This is, to some extent, borne out by the collections of West African tales which have appeared in English. Dorson<sup>3</sup> explains this further by emphasizing that the genre distinctions so important to folklorists are not observed by the Negro folk themselves, and that song can become tale on the whim of an informant, and the process can work the other way, or end up somewhere in between.

As mentioned, the preacher tale is a common form throughout Europe. It is interesting to notice that it is so much stronger in Negro than white tradition in this country. This is perhaps due to the fact that, until recently, the ordination of ministers among the Negro was one based more on divine inspiration than on training of any sort. Such a set-up will almost invariably lead to excesses: opportunists preaching for the possible financial gain rather than because of a real calling. This may in part account for the transmission and proliferation of the preacher tale.

As is common in any culture, the obscene story is the predominant sort that one encounters. Many of these in any group are of peripheral interest only, the point of them often being of a salacious nature without much other distinction. I have not included all of the stories of this sort that I collected, but I have transcribed here some representatives of this type.

From time to time, I have included more than one text of a single story. This was done in order to point out significant variation

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 198.

within the total pattern of the story, i.e. different ways in which the same story was told in this neighborhood.

Where possible, I have indicated where the story illustrated an international tale-type of motif. The references are, of course, to the major indexes of Stith Thompson.

### The Preacher and the Pickles

Mrs. Jones, she was a widow. So the preacher, he'd been trying to get Mrs. Jones for a long time. So he come over one day. He said, "Mrs. Jones," he said, "I think I'll come over to your house for dinner if you would invite me. I'll come over there and we'll set down, and eat a little dinner, we'll sit down and talk. We'll talk 'bout the Bible." So she said, "O.K., well come on over on Sunday.

But she had a little boy, he had a bad habit. Of farting. You see he drink a lot of milk, you know, and it would make him fart. His mother would try to stop him from drinking milk you know, when she was going to have company, but he was sneaking and drinking anyhow. So this Sunday she was going to stop him, 'cause she knew he was going to sneak in and get it, 'cause she had a cow. If she didn't give it he'd go out to the cow and get it from the cow. So he drank this milk, so his mother said, "Well, I know what I'll do. I'll take a pickle and stuff it up his behind." So she told him to get dressed; he went and got washed. She called him in the room, she said, "Come here. Pull down your pants." So she took this pickle and stuck it up his behind. She said, "Now that'll keep you from farting." He said, "Yes, Ma'am."

Well this here preacher liked pickles. So he ate all the food. So he started eating the pickles. So he said, "Unh, I sure wish you had another one." So his mother said, "We haven't got another one in the house." Little boy hustling his mother. She said, "Stop, boy!" He went and got the pickle out of his ass-hole, washed it off, dipped it down in the pickle jar. Took it on the fork, back there, he said, "Here's one more." Preacher he laid back in his chair and he said, "That was a whooper and a whopper." Little boy looked at him and said, "You a god-damn liar, it was my ass-hole stopper."

The Preacher and His Son

Motif X 435 (The boy applies the sermon), X 410 (Jokes on Parsons), related to J 1262.5.1 (Whoever gives alms in God's name will receive tenfold: preacher's wife gives sweetmeats away.)

Little boy asked his father for fifty cents one day, so he could take his girl to the movies. This boy's father was a preacher. Boy's father he had a little church. So he told his son, "O.K., son, here's fifty cents." He said, "Now you spend this fifty cents wisely. But I want you to come to church today before you go to the movies. "O.K., daddy, I'll be there."

So he was in church preaching. So the time for collection and he started hollering, "Oh, I want everybody to dig in their pockets deep, put some money in the church. Yes, sir." Everybody says, "Amen." Congregation hollered, "Amen." "'Cause if anyone in my family was here and didn't put money in the church, I'll skin'em alive." But at the same time he was waving at his son not to put his money in the church.

His son being a young boy figured that his father meant to put the money in there, and when he get home he get his fifty cents back. So when the basket got 'round to his son, he put his fifty cents in the basket.

So service was over, little boy went on home, said "Dad, eruh, could I have my fifty cents back." So he said, "what fifty cents?" He said, "Fifty cents I put in church. You was waving at me telling me to put my money in the church." Said, "Now I figured, when I get back home, eruh, you'd give my money back.

So his father said, "Look, boy. All you got to do is to have faith in the lord. All you got to do is to have faith in the Lord, unhunh, and you get your money back." So he said, "You got to pray."

Well, the kid didn't know he's messed, so he figured his father was right. Went up in the steeple. Start praying. Said, "Oh, Lord, please drop me my fifty cents. Lord drop me my fifty cents." And every time he'd ask Him for fifty cents, he'd hold his hand out. So just then a little bird flew over top him. He said, "Oh, Lord, would you drop me my fifty cents." So just then the bird shit in his hand. He said, "Lord, lookahere. I don't want this shit. All I want is my fifty cents."

### The Preacher and the Farm Woman

See Motifs Q21.1 (Old Woman gave her only cow believing she would receive a hundred in return from God. A bishop hearing of her faith sends her one hundred cows.) J1262.5 (Parishioner hears preacher say that alms are returned one hundred to one.) This story is close to both.

This was another about a preacher. I don't know why they do this to preachers. There was this preacher going around and he was going to different people's houses saying, "Sister or brother, you contribute five or ten dollars to the church and the Lord's gonna see that you get it back and then some.

So he went to this woman. They lived in the country, you know. She had cows and things. You know, bulls and pigs all over her place. So this morning when the preacher come there, he said, "Sister, say would you help the church get started by contributing five dollars?" So she said, "Well, I don't know." He said, "Well, Sister, if you do, you'll get your five back and about twenty-five more." So she said, "Well, O.K., reverend, I'll do that."

So, this was like maybe on a Friday, so Monday morning when she got up, sweeping her back porch up, old bull come up there and dumped his load on her steps. She swept it away and she didn't say anything. But that evening she set there, and she was waiting to get her five back and then this twenty-five.

So this went on every morning. She get up and sweep her porch, and she still never heard anything from this reverend. So next morning when she got up and she saw this pile down there, she looked up at the sky and she said, "Lord, I don't want no bullshit. I just want my five dollars back."

### The Reverend and the Deacon's Contest

Stories on the sexual promiscuity of the clergy are legion. Boccaccio abounds with such stories, heightened by the practice of the Catholic Church of priestly continence. Motif J 1264 (Repatee concerning clerical incontinence.) Similar to J 1269.1 (The Parson's share and the Sexton's) in idea.

The reverend and the deacon was sitting in church. The deacon said, "Reverend, I bet I have did it to more women in this congregation than you have." And the deacon said, "Shit, that what you think." He said, "Now I tell you what to do. When the church service starts, all that you did it to, say 'eeny meeny,' and all that I did it to, I'm gonna say 'eeny miney.'" "All right, that's a deal."

So the congregation started about eight o'clock, you know. They all started walking in. Reverend came in. The first two sisters come in, the reverend said, "eeny meeny." Second two sisters came in, deacon said, "eeny miney." So then long come 'round about ten o'clock, they still coming in, and the deacon's wife walked in. Reverend said, "eeny, meeny." The deacon said, "Hold it, reverend, I told all that you done did it to, you say 'eeny meeny.' But that's my wife." He said, "That's why I said 'eeny meeny.'" "And that's my mother in back of her, my four daughters, my grand-daughter, my mother-in-law, my three aunts, and my great-great-grandmother. Reverend said, "Well, eeny, meeny, meeny, meeny, meeny, meeny, meeny, meeny." Other words, he done broke them all.

(13)

### Open Them Doors

Motif K 1961.1.2.1 (Parody Sermon). Fauset, 93 has a similar brick-throwing incident in the middle of a sermon.

### A

One time this preacher was preaching in the church on how the Holy Ghost came into church and enlightened the people. So he said,

Open them doors, and open them wide,  
Let the gospel come inside.

So they opened the door. So bye-and-bye he said it again.

Open them doors, and open them wide.  
Let the gospel come inside.

So these two bums was coming past. So the preacher said,

Open them doors, and open them wide,  
Let the gospel come inside.



The bums threw in there and hit him with a brick. He said,

Close them doors, and close them quick.

'Cause some son-of-a-bitch done hit me with a brick.

(20)

## B

This is about this preacher. You know he used to go from city to city visiting churches and preaching, you know. And so somebody told him one time, "Well, you're gonna get enough." Well he wasn't really a preacher, you know, but I mean, he was a self-styled preacher. He was a preacher on his own. So somebody told him, "You're gonna get enough going around trying to preach." So he told him, "No, my word is God's gospel," sor some jazz like that.

So he goes to this church one night, and every time he would start to preach a sermon, he would get loud. Tell 'em to open the doors and the windows. So this particular night, this Sunday night, he goes to this church and it's crowded, so he said,

Open the door and open it wide,  
Let my voice be heard outside.

So some little kids were sitting out there, and these little kids got tired of hearing this jazz about he was what God sent, and this, that, and the other. So the little kids hurled a brick in there and hit him on the side of his head. He said,

Shut that door, and shut it quick.  
Some son-of-a-bitch done threw a brick.

(20)

## What Did John Say?

This is tale-type 1833A, "The Boy Applies the Sermon." Motif X435.1. For other American Negro texts of this popular story, see Dorson (TPB), 255; Fauset, 94-5 (Nova Scotia): JAF 47:314; Parsons (FSSI), 127-8; SFQ, 19:112. For a close variant where a sermon causes a thief to own thievery, see Dorson (NFTM), 170; Fauset, 98.

Once this preacher was preaching, and he drunk a lot. So he told this bootlegging son that he wanted him to go to his father and

send him a pint of goathair. So the boy went over there to his father, John, and he told him, said, "Pop, reverend over there told me to tell you send him a pint of goathair." He said, "You tell that motherfucker that I ain't sending him shit till he pay me for that last pint."

So the boy went over there and sat in back. The church had started. "Oh, damn. I got to wait till the sermon is over." It just so happened he was preaching about John. So he asked one time, "What did John say?" So the little boy was sitting there. Said, "I know daggone well, the preacher didn't ask me what did John say, and all these people in the congregation. Preacher said, "What did John say? I ain't gonna ask you but one more time. I want to know." Little boy said, "Well if he ask me again, I'm gonna tell him." He said, "What did John say?" Little boy said, "John say he ain't gonna send you a god damn thing till you pay him for the last pint you got."

(13)

### Poppa Stole the Deacon's Bull

This story is of some antiquity and provenance. Addy prints a representative English text, very close to the early American one printed by Botkin (TAA, 235-6, from Isaiah Thomas, Jr., Almanac [1810]). Johnson (FCSH, 141-2) prints a Negro version from the Sea Islands. Most of the above vary the ending from that given here. Usually, the father hears of the plot and teaches his son a similar song which implicates the preacher in illicit sexual activities.

### A

Now this here's about the reverend and the deacon. Deacon said he had a bull. So the reverend's family was in 'dation. He had a whole lot of kids, reverend didn't have no money, buy nothing to eat, so he went and stole the deacon's bull. So he invited everybody 'round. He even invited deacon over. "Come over to my house, Sunday, 'cause right after church we're gonna have all kind of beef." So the reverend said, "O.K."

So he came over and he sat down, and he, you know how they do in the country, kids eats first and then the grown-ups. So the reverend sit down, and he said, "This here sure some good food. Um, um, um. You know one thing, rev?" He said, "What's that Brother Deacon?" He said, "You know somebody stole my bull." He said, "Um, ain't that something, people just going 'round taking other people's stuff." And all the same time he's the one that stole the bull.

So the kids was outside playing, so the reverend said, "I guess I'll go and sit out there in the back for a while, see the kids play." So at that time the kids had made up this here new game. Had each other by the hand going around the circle singing.



Oh, Poppa stole the deacon's bull.  
All us children got a belly full.

So the deacon said, "Sing that song again. I'ma give you a nickel apiece if you sing that song again for me." So by them being kids and all, a whole nickel. You know a nickel's a whole lot of money to a kid. "Sing it again." So they start singing,

Oh, Poppa stole the deacon's bull.  
All us children got a belly full.

So he said, "Thank you, kids. Now I want you all to come to church next Sunday, and I'ma give you all fifty cents apiece. I want you all to sing that same song in church. 'Cause that there song carries a message." So they said "O.K."

So they ran and told their mother that they were going to sing in church. So their mother was glad to have the children sing in church. She didn't know what they was going to sing about.

So the deacon, he was going around to everybody's house, telling them "Reverend Jones' kids gonna be in church, and they gonna sing a song, and it's carrying a message. And I want all you all to come down here this here. The Lord sent them children to send this message. I want you to come on down there and hear them. So he went on over to Sister Mary's house, told Sister Mary about it. Pretty soon he had gone to all the people in the community and the people had spread the word.

So finally that Sunday came. Children come to church, and they was clean. Well by the time they got there, the church was so packed that so many people had to sit in the back of the church. So he told them, "Now when you go up there, I want you to sing loud so I can hear what you're singing, too." So they said, "Yes sir, Daddy, we gonna sing loud."

So the preacher, you know how the preacher do before he bring on gospel singers. He'd go to preaching, telling you this and that, so he building up the people to hear this song. He said, "Yeah, ladies and gentlemens, you don't know. Kids can bring a message. Yes, sir, kids can sure bring a message." He said, "Now just listen to this here message that Reverend Jones' kids gonna bring to you. Now sing that song, children."

They got up there,

Oh, poppa stole the deacon's bull,  
All us children got a belly full.

So the reverend in the back, couldn't hear them. So he said, "Sing up louder, here boy. Come on now, sing up louder so I can hear you." By that time the people down front are looking at him. So he wondered what they looking at him for. So they start singing:

Oh, poppa stole the deacon's bull.  
All us children got a belly full.

He said, "Look boy, I want you to sing it louder now. You all sing that song so I can hear it." So they got to the top of their voices:

Oh, poppa stole the deacon's bull.  
All us children got a belly full.

So the reverend look and said, "Oh yeah? Well, children

When you told that you told your last,  
Now when I get home I'm gonna kick your ass."

## B

These little boys were walking through the town singing:

My father stole the preacher's bull, un hunh, un hunh.  
 My father stole the preacher's bull,  
 Me and my brother had a belly full, un hunh.

Some lady saw them. Said, "Son, if you sing that song in church Sunday, I'll give you a dollar." "Sure, ma'am. I'll be there."

So next Sunday, the boys got up nice, bright, and early, sitting in church. The congregation was gathering around and the lady told them to start singing. Jumped up, he said:

My father stole the preacher's bull, un hunh, un hunh.  
 My father stole the preacher's bull,  
 And me and my brother had a belly full, un hunh.

What he didn't know, his father had came to church. First time in his life that Sunday, his father was in church. Father was sitting way back in the corner of the church. So his father heard him, and stood up and he said:

You sung your first, you sung your last,  
 When you get home I'ma beat you ass, un hunh.

(20)

You Seen Willy?

Dorson (NFTM) lists this as an "oikotype of Type 326." It is close to motif J 1495.2 ("When Caleb Comes"). Also E 281 (Ghosts Haunt House), H 1411 (Fear Test: saying in haunted house). For other American reportings of this fairly common story see: Dorson (NFTM), 128-9; Dorson (NTPB), 78; Botkin (TAA) 222 (from Alben W. Barkley, That Reminds Me, N. Y., 1954, p. 37); JAF, 40:258-9 (Ala.); Randolph (Church House), 163-4; Roberts, 109-34 (13 variants).

This little old preacher he was coming down the road one day. So he passed this here farm house. So he went over, said, "Er un, say, er uh, do you have any rooms to put me up over night? I got my own food and everything. I just want a place to stay." She said, "Well you go on down there to the shed house. Tell me it's a little haunted, but. I guess you can make it over there." "Oahh. Well could I borrow your frying pan, so I can fry my pork chops." So she said, "Yeah."

So the preacher went on over to the shed house, so long 'bout twelve o'clock he started reading his Bible under the candlelight. So here come this ghost. He said, "Er uh," tapped the preacher on the shoulder, he said, "You seen Willy?" He said, "No, I ain't seen Willy." So the ghost looked over, and went away rattling his chains and all. Came back 'bout five minutes later. He said, "You seen Willy?" So he said, "No, I ain't seen Willy." So he left.

So here comes another ghost in. So he said, "Hey there, have you seen Willy?" Reverend said, "No, I ain't seen Willy." So he grabbed the frying pan, drink the hot grease, ate the pork chop, grabbed some of the hot coals to wipe his ass. The preacher looked up and said, "Well, god damn, you ain't Willy. Let me get the hell out of here."

(20)

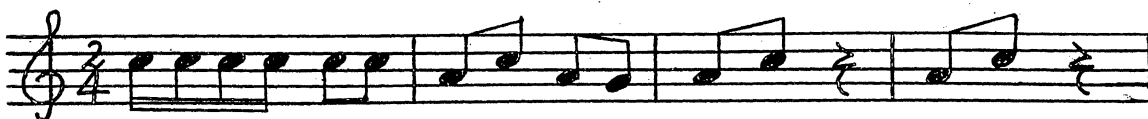
### I'm Hauling Sand

This most nearly resembles the appearance of the ghost as it slowly drops down the chimney. As such it can be considered, with that story as a humorous outgrowth of Type 326 (or more precisely, a humorous relative). Motifs J 1495 (Person runs from actual or supposed ghost); E 293 (Ghosts frighten people deliberately); H 1411 (Fear test: staying in haunted house); E 281 (Ghosts haunt house). See Dorson (NTPB) for a similar story.

### A

The reverend and the preacher they were in church, the congregation was talking 'bout ghosts, so they wanted to prove to them there wasn't no such thing as ghosts. So they picked the hauntedest house they could find, and they said they'd spend the night there.

So they was sitting down, reading, all of a sudden they heard someone say:



Coming up the back road  
And I'm hauling sand.

Deacon looked out the window. He said, "You hear that, rev?" Rev said it wasn't nothing. He turned the page in the Bible.

Coming through the kitchen room  
And I'm hauling sand.

Deacon said, "You hear that, rev?" Rev said it wasn't nothing. He turned the page.

I'm standing in the hallway  
And I'm hauling sand.

Deacon said, "Did you hear that, rev?" Rev said it wasn't nothing and he turned another page.

I'm standing in the front  
And I'm hauling sand.

Deacon said, "Rev, you see anything?" Rev looked around the room, he said, "I don't see nothing. Just somebody playing a trick on us."

I'm standing in back of the reverend  
And I'm hauling sand.

Deacon said, "Rev, I don't see nothing." Rev didn't say nothing.

I'ma put my hand on the reverend's shoulder  
And I'm hauling sand.

And the hand hit the reverend's shoulder, and he didn't see nothing. He got up, put his Bible down, put his hat and coat on, broke out the door. Deacon said, "Rev, where you going?" Said, "I'm going out the front door, and I'm hauling ass."

## B

Now this preacher, he come from out of church. They just got through praying and everything. Somebody come to his house that was haunting him which said.

Coming up the sidewalk, swift and sound,  
Doowah, Doowah.

So the preacher turned around, he looked to see where it was coming from. He couldn't see it. Looked out the window and everything and he still couldn't see it. So it say:

Coming through the front door, swift and sound.  
Doowah, Doowah.

The preacher got scared then, you know, 'cause he didn't know what was going on. So he goes to the door and see what happening.

Coming up the front porch, swift and sound,  
Doowah, Doowah.

So all of a sudden the preacher he turned around and said:

Going out the back door, hitting ass,  
Doowah, Doowah.

Bear Meeting and Prayer Meeting

This tale is common in the United States, both in song and story forms. As a minstrel-type song it seems to have achieved some degree of popularity. Brown, III, 511-12, prints two variants; Dorson (AF, 196) alludes to a text; Parsons (FSSI), 177, has one stanza from the South Carolina Sea Islands; White (210) prints it from Alabama; Ford (FSA, 301-2) from the Ozarks; and it is mentioned both in the Shearin Kentucky syllabus (31) and the Davis (FSV) compendium (336). In tale form, we have texts from: Botkin (TAA), 120 (from Wit and Humor of the American Pulpit, Philadelphia, 1904, pp. 94-6); PTFLS, 10:36 (Texas); SFQ, 18:129 (Ala.); Tidwell, 132 (from SFQ). Most of these are Negro texts. The verse-sermon in the story suggests its connection with the song. Jones, 66-8, prints a related exemplary story that may be the immediate ancestor of this.



Well, the deac and the rev was in the woods one day. The deacon and the rev was breaking some wood together, taking it to the church to get the church warm before the service start. All of a sudden, the rev heard a long noise. He said (whispered), "Hey, deacon." Deacon said, "What's the matter, brother?" He said, "Did you hear that?" "Hear what?" "That strange noise I just hear." "No, I didn't hear nothing." He said, "Sound like a bear." He said, "Look, reverend, we is members of the church. Leaders of the flock. Prayer giving men. Now if a bear come in this woods, the thing to do is to get down on your knees and pray that help be here and we be saved." He said, "Yeah, rev, but suppose help don't get here on time?" "Don't worry 'bout it. The Lord watches over all his sheeps." "All right."

So they kept on working. All of a sudden rev looks up and he seen this great big grizzly bear coming through the woods. Rev dropped the wood, dropped the ax and he broke out. He ran about four or five of them old country miles. Them's long miles. And he sat down, just a-panting for breath. (pants)

After awhile, he looked up, saw a cloud of dust coming down the road. And he looked real good, there goes old deacon. He said, "Hold it deac." He said, "Wait a minute." Deac said (panting), "What's the matter, son?" "Don't hold me now. I'm in a hurry." He said, "What's your trouble? I thought you told me that if a bear come you would get down and pray?"

He said, "Well, son, it was like this; I got down and said the shortest, quickest, fastest prayer came to my mind." He said, "Just what did you pray, rev?" "It was like this. I said to the great man up above

You delivered one man from the belly of the whale.  
 Delivered three from the fiery furnace.  
 That's what the good book say.  
 Then a body declare,  
 If you can't help me, Lord,  
 Please don't help that bear.

I kept on praying, brother, but there no help comes. Next best thing to do was to get on 'way from there." He said, "Yeah, but you didn't pray hard enough." He said, "Brother, I come to one declusion. Praying's all right at prayer meeting, but it ain't too good at bear meeting."

(13)

### The Preacher and the Sinners

This is one of the many stories here that could be classified under 1961.1.2.1 (Parody Sermon). For another reporting of this story, with the holdout a bootlegger, see TFSB, 24:110.

One day preacher was sitting up in church and he looked down at the congregation. He said, "Brothers and sisters, we are all gathered here in this church, we are all gathered in this church today to pray. Be holy. Here there still is among us some sinners, hypocrites. Today, we gonna find the evil from the good. Pick out the good from the bad. The ones that's worthy of the flock, and the ones that ain't. Now I say, all you faggots get up and walk to the back of the room." All of the faggots got up and they walked to the back of the room. "Now I say all you bulldaggers, walk to the front of the room." All the bulldaggers, they got up and walked to the front of the room. He said, "Now I say, all you motherfuckers, get over on the side of the hall." And all the motherfuckers got over on the side of the hall. "He said, "Now all you no-good, you midnight ramblers, alcoholics, late players, out-stayers, wife-beaters, children deserters, get over on the other side of the room." So all them people got up and they walked to the other side of the room. He said, "Now all among you, these sinners is all around us. And there's not one man or woman or child in among us that is purified, and brother, why are you sitting down on the front row?"

There was one little lonely brother sitting on the front row. He said, "Well, rev, you ain't called my name yet." He said, "Well, I said, all the bulldaggers in the back." He said, "I ain't none of them." "I said, all you motherfuckers on the side." "I ain't none of them." "I said, all the midnight ramblers, the gamblers, the wife deserters, and the wife-beaters get outside." He said, "I ain't none of them." "Then, brother, what is your sin?" He said, "I'm a cocksucker." "Come on up here with me, son."

(13)

### The Preacher Bends Down

This is once again K1961.1.2.1 (Parody sermon). Dorson prints a text (NFTM), 170, and notes, "This suggests Type 183k, "The Parson and Sexton at Mass," where two connivers communicate by chanting."

This here preacher was in church doing his regular sermon. As you know, the regular ranting, up and down they go, kneeling down, standing up. Oh Lord this, and Oh Lord that. "My children, I want you to kneel down your heads in prayer."

As everyone kneeled down their head in prayer, this cat's wallet fell on the ground. Preacher reached down and picket it up, and kept on preaching. "Well, Lord, Lord, if anyone saw me I'll split it with you later."

(20)

Gabriel Blows His Horn

This is Type 1785, Motif X 411, (Parson put to flight during his sermon). This is a common story among American Negroes. See Dorson (NFTM), 169 (lists two additional tales in notes very close to this); Brewer (Brazos), 98-100; Fauset, 94 (Nova Scotia); JAF, 35:295; 41:552 (Phila.); Parsons, (FSSI), 58.

This preacher had a church strictly for ladies. Every night about six o'clock the congregation of ladies would come in. The preacher he would preach and preach, get home about nine o'clock. It got so it kept up so long the men in the town was gitting mad about this.

So one day they went to church about six o'clock, the preacher was preaching. So the men in town they got together and they saw these two little boys. One of them had a bugel, and one was just running around playing. So he gave the boy that didn't have the bugle a match. He said, "Go play with these matches over there by the church." Boy said, "O.K." So he started playing with the match and set the church on fire. Church was just a'blazing. They told the other boy to walk through the woods and play the bugle. Church was just a'blazing. So the fire was coming up behind the preacher and he didn't see it. The ladies in the church started backing up, heading for the door, just slowly backing up. After a while all the people were out, the preacher was standing on the platform:

When Gabriel blows we all shall go.  
When Gabriel blows we all shall go.

The preacher looked around and saw the fire, headed for the door and a beam fell and blocked it. He turned to go for the window and his coat got caught on a nail. Just then the little boy started blowing the bugle. Toot, toot, totoot. Preacher simply replied, "Oh, Mr. Gabriel, don't play that shit, yet."

(20)

Preacher Walks the Water

This is included in K1970 (Sham miracles) and is close to K 1961.1.3 (Sham parson; the sawed pulpit). Brewer (Brazos), 46-7, prints a similar text.

## A

This here reverend, he was preaching. "You know that Moses walked the water. So can I. What you think about that, deacon?" He hollered "Yeah," 'cause they was in cahoots. But the deacon didn't like this preacher. He said, "Yeah, you can walk the water, Brother." He said, "I tell you what I'ma do. Next Sunday, I'm gonna walk the water for you. I'm gonna smoke the water like Moses." Now everybody in church they wanted to see this. So he said, "Now look here, deac, early Sunday morning, go out and put three boards out there. Tack'em together, and I'll walk on the boards and it will look like I'm walking on the water." The deacon said, "O.K."

But instead of him putting three boards, he only put two boards. So the deacon came out there Sunday, the boards were nice and strong. He only tried out one, he figured the rest of them were the same way. So all the people coming 'round, he's already standing in the water. Don't come no closer, 'less you all will knock the spirit off. I told you that Moses smoke the waters, didn't I." Everybody looked and it looked like he was standing on the water.

So he started walking out on his plank. He said, "Didn't Moses smoke the water?" The children hollered, "Yeah." He said, "I'm on the first one. Ain't that right, deac?" "That's right, preacher." He said, "I should be getting to the second one right now, shouldn't I?" You're almost there." He said, "Well pretty soon I'll be at the end of this journey." Deacon said, "Yes you will." And by the time he said that, he had stepped off, he didn't step on the third board, but he fell down. He said, "Oh, Lord." Deacon looked at him and said, "What's the matter?" He said, "I wonder who moved that god damned board."

(17)

## B

There once was a preacher who used to make a yearly festival of walking on the water. He planned and he planned and he planned for this festival. But everybody never knew that the day before this festival this preacher would go down to the lake and put boards underneath the water, just a little lower, so the people couldn't see 'em.

So after the preacher went down there this day and put the boards under the water, these boys was down there and they wanted to go swimming. So one boy dived in and hit the board. He said, "I'll be damned who put these boards under here?" They tore 'em down and took out the pool.

So the next day, the preacher said, "Yes, congregation, I'm gonna walk the water for you. God is surely with me, 'cause I'm walk the water. Watch me walk the water." The preacher he walked out a little ways, the boys had left a couple of the boards there. Walked,

walked, stepped off the end of the boards and down the water he went. Come up gasping and struggling, hollering for help. Went down again. Each time he come up he hollered, "Oh, what motherfucker took these boards out of this water?"

(20)

### Who Believes?

This short anecdote is a vestige of Type 1826, motif X452 (Parson has no need to preach). For an Ozark text, see Randolph (Sticks), 129-31.

You know Father Divine. Well he was holding this big meeting up in Yankee Stadium, or Shibe Park, or Carnegie Hall, and he had this big meeting. He was preaching and he said, "Who believes that I can walk the water?" Everyone shouted, "We do." "Who believes that I can walk the water?" "We do." So he just said, "Well if you all believe it I don't have to do it."

(7)

### Baptism and Belief

This could perhaps be included under motif J 1260 (Repartee based on church or clergy). Dorson (NFTM) has a text of this on page 173 from Michigan Negroes, and Brewer (Brazos), 54-6 has one from Texas Negroes.

You know Sunday services preachers have a baptizing. So the brother came down with his robe on, got down into the baptizing pit. Preacher put him down, grabbed him by the shoulder. He said, "Brother, I baptize you in the name, do you know?" He pushed him in the water, and he held him down. Sister started talking to the preacher, he forgot he was holding the fellow. Pulled him up, he said, "Brother, I baptize you, do you know?" Pushed him down again. Guy was gasping for breath when he came up. Pulled him up. "Brother, do you know?" Pushed him down again. This time the guy could hardly get his breath, he was drinking water when he came up. Preacher said, "Brother, do you know?" Brother said, "I know god damn well you trying to drown me."

(13)

### The Preacher is Lost

One day this preacher was taking a walk in the woods. Just walking, not concerned with where he was going or nothing. So he was walking and walking, started to turn to go back. When he went back he couldn't find his way out. So he said, "Well, I'm not worried worried, God gonna show me my way out." So he kept on walking. Walked till night come. "I ain't worried, 'cause God's gonna show me my way out." So he walked all night. Bright and early next morning, he still walking. He walked up against this log, and he kneeled down. He hold his hands out, and he said, "God, please show me my way out." Just then a bird flew over and shit in his hand. He said, "God, don't hand hand me no shit, I'm really lost."

(20)

### His Prayer Is Unheeded

One day a preacher was walking across a bridge. He was the kind of preacher that always cussed a lot. He was walking across the bridge and he heard the train coming. And when he turned, he slipped and hit the side of the bridge. Hanging on the bridge, he looked down to see the water below. So he started praying. He said, "God, don't let me fall in this water." Just then his left hand started to slip. He was hanging by his right hand, still praying. "God, don't let me fall in this water. I'll never say another cuss word." So his right hand slipped and he fell in the water. Water came up to his knees. He said, "Ain't this a damn shame. I done all this damn praying, and this water up to my motherfucking knees."

(20)

### Cursing Cured

There was once a little boy that was continuously always cussing. So his mother and father was puzzled by him always cussing seeing that they was people that never used no foul language. So they asked the preacher to come over one night, give a suggestion how to stop the boy from cussing.

They had the preacher over for dinner. Preacher got there, everybody sat down at the table to eat. So the boy's mother went to say grace. Boy replied, "Damn, Ma, watcha doing?" So everybody started eating, so the boy wanted to season his food, so he called to the

preacher, "Hey, bitch, pass the salt down here." Preacher didn't say nothing, just passed the salt.

So after they got finished eating, mother told the boy to go to bed. He put up a big squawk, but he went anyhow. The boy's mother asked the preacher what to do about the boy cussing. So the preacher told her, to late that night to take the boy out of his bed, don't awake him and take him to the woods. Dig a hole and put the boy in it. In the morning when he wake up, he'll never cuss again.

So that night they took the boy out into the woods, dug a deep hole and set the boy down in it. First thing, early the next morning the boy woke up. See himself laying in the hole with blankets wrapped around him, and first thing he replied, "Damn, it's Judgement Day, and I'm the first motherfucker to arise."

(20)

### The Curser Outcursed

This man used to walk in this grocery store every day. So one day he walked into the grocery store and said:

I want some motherfucking meat  
For my motherfucking cat.  
Not too motherfucking lean,  
Not too motherfucking fat.  
I want it packed very neat in a bag.

Pop was tired of having this happening every day. Every day when he wanted his meat for his cat. So the next day, Pop was walking down this street and he seen this boy shooting crap. "God damn, I missed again." Pop looked down and looked at the boy. "That motherfucker got a seven again. God damn it, baby, Momma needs a new pair of shoes. Damn it, missed again. Motherfucking cocksucker." "Hey, son, you want a job?" "God damn right. How much money I'ma make, Pop?" "I'll give you twenty dollars a week." "Sure, what time you want me to come by? I'll be the fuck around there. God damn straight, I'll be there."

Next morning, early in the morning, little boy at the counter. So this stud walk in and said:

I want some motherfucking meat  
For my motherfucking cat.

Not too motherfucking lean,  
 Not too motherfucking fat,  
 Pack it very neat in a bag.

Boy looked up at him, grabbed his bag, and there's what he said:

Here's the motherfucking meat  
 For your motherfucking cat.  
 Not too motherfucking lean,  
 Not too motherfucking fat.  
 Aim your feet at the motherfucking door.  
 And don't come back no motherfucking more.

(19)

### The Judge Replies

This guy was standing on the corner, you know, he kept walking down the street. He said:

My name is Fucking Pete,  
 I walk the fucking street.  
 I fuck all the shores  
 That think they're so fucking neat.

So the police walked up to him, said, "What you say?" Said:

My name is Fucking Pete,  
 I walk the fucking street.  
 I fuck all the bitches  
 That think they're so fucking neat.

Cop said, "I'ma take you in. Disorderly conduct, 'citing a riot, disturbing the peace, resisting arrest." "I ain't did nothing." "You're going in anyway."

So next morning he got up. Judge said, "What's the charge?" "Disorderly conduct, 'sturbing the peace, 'citing a riot." "Um, what's your name?"



My name is Fucking Pete,  
 I walk the fucking street.  
 I fuck all these bitches  
 Who think they're so fucking neat.

The judge said:

Yeah, son. Well I'm the fucking judge,  
 Who's give you some fucking time.  
 Here's fifteen years  
 To get that fucking off your mind.

(13)

#### Argument of the Parts of the Body

The parts of the body were all talking to themselves about which was the most important. Finally Peter rose up and spoke. He said, "I wear two stone tied around my neck. At night when I go to bed to take a little rest, I'm shoved in a dark hole, next door to a shithouse, and I stay till I puke. If I come out and stand up for my rights, I get shoved in again."

(13)

#### Stack and Billy in Hell

This story is reminiscent of the ballad, "The Farmer's Curst Wife," which has a similar incident. Hughes and Bontemps' version of "Stackolee," page 359, has this incident as part of the story with Stack the hero rather than Billy. See page 282 for further discussion.

Now you know, everybody heard the joke about Stackolee. Well, they didn't tell you that Stackolee died and Billy died and they went to Hell. Devil said to Billy, "I seen you every day and I know you was coming. I knowed you was on your way." So he told Billy he could have all the fun he wants, just to keep away from his wife.

So Billy was goofin' around one day and got hold of the Devil's wife, started working. Got through, he got hold of the Devil's daughter started to working. Got through, grabbed hold of the Devil's niece, he started working. He was running around Hell trying to catch the Devil's wife. She said, "Devil, get him down." When three little jumpy little bastards jumped out of the wall and said, "Get that motherfucker before he fucks us all."

(13)

### Himself Discovered

This tale is reminiscent of Chaucer and Boccaccio in situation. As such it has much in common with many possible motifs: J 2136 (Numskull brings about own capture); J 582 (Foolishness of premature coming out of hiding); J 1805 (Other misunderstandings of words); X 111.7 (Misunderstood words lead to comic results). Baughman gives a motif N 2775.5.2 (subdivision of "Criminal confesses because he thinks himself accused") which nearest approximates the story. JAF, 32:372, has two stories in which a similar misunderstanding of words leads to the unmasking of hidden lover.

Once there was a woman and man who were married, and the woman was a whore. Now the woman always cried broke when collectors came, so when the ice-man came and asked for pay, she said, "Come into my bedroom," and she gave him a piece of cock. So then the husband came home and said why does she have to fuck the collectors instead of paying. So she said, "All right, I won't do it again."

But as soon as her husband left, the colored insurance man came, so she told him, "I don't have any money but I can pay you with some cunt." So he accepted. Meanwhile the husband came home from work much earlier than usual, and knocked on the door. The woman said, "Hide. That's my husband." So he hid in the closet.

Her husband sat down and said, "You been messing around again, haven't you?" So he threw her down on the bed and started pulling the hairs on her cock. Meanwhile, remember the man is still in the closet. The husband gets down to two hairs, and they are hard to get out. So he starts cursing, "Come on out, you black bastards, damn it." The man in the closet starts shaking. The husband says again, "Come out of there, damn it, you black bastard." So the man comes running out of the closet with one shoe on and britches halfway up, running straight through the door.

(17)

Talking Back, Afterward

These next two stories are the talking animal tales transmitted to a city environment and urban interest. The first is unusual both from the fact that it is an outward exemplary tale, carrying much of the values of the group. The character of Brother Rabbit, as pointed out in Chapter Three (page 75) has changed considerably from his trickster role.

Brother Fox had been trying to get Brother Rabbit for a long time. So he told Brother Bear one day, he said, "Brother Bear, now I know how we can trick that old rabbit into giving himself up." Brother Bear said, "How will we do it?" He said, "Now we'll invite all the animals in the forest to a party, all except Brother Rabbit. He'll be so embarrassed and hurt that he won't want to live and he'll give himself up. And we'll have that rabbit stew before the week is up."

So all the invitations were around. So that Saturday evening, you know, all the animals were going down to the party. Even the skunk washed up and put the perfume on, went into the party. Brother Rabbit was sitting on the post and all. Said, "Where you all going?" "Down to Brother Buzzard's house." "Brother Buzzard?" "Yeah. Brother Fox is giving a party over there." Rabbit ran to the house and got dressed, and ran down to the house. Brother Buzzard said, "Sorry, Brother Fox and Brother Bear say they don't want you in it. I'm sorry, that's what they told me."

So the Rabbit turned away with his head turned down. He feeling sad, downhearted, tears in his eyes. Felt like he was alone in the world. But then he got mad. He said, "I know what I'll do." He went home and shined his shoes, and got his shotgun and went back and kicked the door open. "Don't a motherfucker move." He walked over the table, got all he wanted to eat. Walked over to the bar and got himself all he wanted to drink. He reached over and he grabbed the Lion's wife and he dance with her. Grabbed the Ape's wife and did it to her. Then he shit in the middle of the floor and walked out.

So after he left, you know, the Giraffe jumped up. He said, "Who was that little long-eared, fuzzy-tailed motherfucker just walked in here with all that loud noise?" The Bear looked at him and said, "Now look, no use getting loud. You was here when he was here, why didn't you ask then?" (Like guys, they like that. You always get bad after the other person is gone, but you never say nothing while they is there.)

Mr. Buzzard and Mr. Rabbit

Brother Rabbit was out on the job one day, you know, and he was spreading fertilizer 'round his garden. So Brother Buzzard came by, and he said, "Hey, Brother Rabbit." "Yeah, Brother Buzzard." "Whatcha doing?" "Spreading fertilizer." "Fertilizer, what's that?" "Nothing but horse, cow manure." "What it do?" "Makes the soil better. Makes the soil, grass, and crops grow." He said, "Look, I got a little small garden in the back of my house." He said, "How 'bout bringing me some of that over, Saturday night?" "I'll bring you a wagon load." "How much you charge me?" "I'll just charge you half price." Said, "All right."

So Brother Buzzard he went on home. Brother Rabbit got on up Saturday morning, load the wagon up, took it over to Brother Buzzard's house. Brother Buzzard, he'd got into a whole lot of money. He'd bought a big mansion. You know, he had a chauffeur, butler, and they was having a cocktail party that night. All these here rich animals from the forest were there, you know. So here comes the rabbit with his dungarees, full of shit, you know, hat broke down, rings the bell. Butler come to the door. Said, "I come to see Brother Buzzard." Said (haughtily), "I'm sorry, sir, but there is no Brother Buzzard here. Mr. Buzzard is the resident." He said, "Wait a minute, now. This is Brother Buzzard's house." "No, sir. Buzzard is the resident." He said, "Look now. Brother Buzzard told me to bring him 'round a load of fertilizer. He told me to bring it today, right here. Now I know he lives here, 'acause I been here thousand times." Said, "I'm sorry, sir, Mr. Buzzard live here."

By that time, all the confusion, all them rich animals come to the door. They looking. So the rabbit's getting mad. He said, "Tell Brother Buzzard I want to see him. I ain't gonna tell you no more." "Yes, sir, Mr. Buzzard live here." He said, "Well you go tell Mr. Buzzard that Mr. Rabbit is here with the shit."

(20)

Irishman, Jew, Colored Man

The next five stories concern the triumph of a Negro in contest with men of other origins. This is, of course, a familiar pattern of story found among every group with the member of that group winning in such contests. These jokes are perhaps more important to the Negro, because stories of overt triumph of this sort are fairly recent (though a strong germ of such an idea is found in some of the Marster-John stories; perhaps the strongest difference is in the tone of the pieces). Dorson has printed a number of stories conforming to this mold. See (NFIM), 77; (NTPB), 89; WF, 13:96-7; see also Brewer (Brazos), 1, 88-9.

These here three fellows, you know, they went down to Hell. Now the Devil looked down on them and said, "Now brothers, you have sinned. That's why you was sent to me. But I'ma give you a break. I'm gonna let you go upstairs if any of you can be slick enough to do something that I can't find out how it was done."

So the Jew looked at him and said, "Well, now, I been down on earth, I done slicked everybody down there of all their money. Guess I can get past this old Devil here." He said, "Well, Devil, I tell you what you do. Give me a hundred dollars." The Devil gave the Jew a hundred dollars. The Jew went over to the colored guy and said, "How much money you got?" Colored fellow said, "I go 'bout four hundred dollars." He said, "I tell you what. I bet you can't tell me the president on the ten-dollar bill, quick." Colored guy said, "No, can't tell you that. What was we betting?" "We was betting four hundred dollars. No give it here." So he went back to the Devil and said, "How'd I do that?" Devil said, "You cheated the man out of his money, that's how you did it." So he stayed in Hell.

Went over to the Irishman, he said, "You wanta do anything?" Irishman said, "Yeah." Irishman took a whole field of plain sand; Irishman planted, irrigated it, made grass grow. Asked the Devil, said "How'd I do that?" Devil told him how it was done.

He got down to the little colored fellow sitting over in the corner, grinning to himself. "What you grinning for?" He said, "I'm just thinking. You done tricked the Jew, you done fooled the hell out of the Irishman, you gonna come over here now fucking with me. Now, I'ma tell you what I'ma gonna do for my gig. Want you to go find me a can. Get me a brace and a bit, and two cans of lima beans, come back." So the Devil went and did what he told him. Came over and eat these two pots of lima beans, drilled four holes in the can. Sat on top and farted. He said, "Now Mr. Wise Guy, tell me which of them holes it came out of." The Devil said, "That one on the left." Said, "You're a lying motherfucker, that came out my asshole."

(13)

### Chinaman, Jew, Negro

There was this Chinaman, a Jew, and a Negro. They was caught fucking the farmer's wife. So the farmer said, "Well, uh, Chink, how would you like to die?" So the Chinese said, "Er uh, well, my father, he was a swordsman, so I'd like you to chop my dick off." So he said, "O.K." So he asked the Jew, he said, "What was your father?" So he said, "My father owned a steel mill, so you have to weld my dick off." So he got to the Negro. He said, "What about you?" He said, "My father was a lollypop maker, so you have to suck my dick off."

(17)

The Devil Lets Them Dream

There are a number of jokes that make fun of the more negative characteristics of the Negro. The most common form taken in these jokes is to attempt to buy something from the Devil and to defer payment. This comment on his supposed laziness is the only reference to this attribute that I have found.

One time there was a Jew, an Irishman, and a colored man. So this man was going to give away a million dollars. So he wanted to see who was the smartest of all. Whoever was the smartest he was going to give him the million dollars. So he asked this Irishman, "What would he do if he went to sleep and he dreamt that he had a million dollars and woke up and found he had a million dollars? The Irish being a wise man he jumped up and said, "I guess I'd invest it. Get me a business of some sort, try to get me another million." So he said, "All right."

So he went to the Jew. So he asked the Jewish fellow, he said, "Uh, supposing you went to sleep, woke up, dreamt about a million dollars, woke up and found you had a million dollars? What would you do?" So the Jew jumps up all excited. He said, "I'd buy me a couple of meat markets, kosher markets, and so forth, try to get me another million."

So he came to this colored guy, he said, "Uh, if you went to bed and dreamt about a million dollars, woke up and had a million dollars, what would you do?" So the colored guy jumped up and said, "Shit, I'd go back to sleep and try to dream me up another million."

(13)

Good Morning, This Morning

This woman had a whore house, you know. She had four girls that lived there. But the police was getting on them so bad that it was hot. Every time the police would come in they would trick with one of them, soon as they gave the girls money they would lock her up. The soman told them, she said, "Now girls, tonight is Friday night and everybody will be getting paid. Big Business. Now y'all ain't gonna see no money. When they first come there they gonna give me the money Then you just count how many tricks you have. In the morning when you come down, every time you say "morning" that means how many tricks you have." They said all right.

So one of the girls said, "I'm sick, I can't work tonight." "All right. I tell you what. Mary, Susie, y'all work." Three girls, one

was a Puerto Rican girl, other was an Irish girl, other was a colored girl there.

So they went on that night and business was pretty fair. Next morning come down stairs. Puerto Rican girl come down, she said, "Nice morning, this morning." So she gave her enough for two tricks. This Irish girl come down, she said, "Good morning, this morning, how are you this morning?" Gave her money for three tricks. 'Bout two hours passed, then the colored girl come down. So everybody looked at her. They said, "How you doing?" She said, "Good morning, this morning. If every morning was like this morning, have a good morning every morning, wouldn't we?"

(13)

### The Coon in the Box

This is perhaps the most popular of the cycle of Negro stories, usually called "Marster-John" jokes. Joel Chandler Harris printed a story very similar to this in Uncle Remus and His Friends, III (De Sparrer Kin Tell You). It is a version of Type 1641, "Doctor Know-All," the pun in the early Grimm text being on "crab" (kreb). Motifs N 688 (What is in dish); K 1970 (Sham miracles); K 1956 (Sham wise-men). Some printings of the tale in similar forms from Negro sources are: Dorson (NFTM), 51-3; Hurston, 111-12; JAF, 11:13; 32:370; 40:265-6; 41:542 (Phila.); Jones, 89-90 (1888); MWF, 8:130; Parsons (Cape Verde), pt. 1; 88; Southern Workman, Vol. 23, No. 12, p. 209; WF, 13:89. Randolph (Devil's), 135 gives a white Ozark text.

This here fellow was working on a farm. Colored fellow. One night they was sitting outside, boss said, "Sam, what's that over there behind that log?" "I can't see it, boss." He said, "Well, there's a rumor going 'round that you are psychic." He said, "Well, I gather that it's probably nothing but an old rabbit down there." So they went down and they took a peek and it was a rabbit. Said, "What's that behind the tree there?" Sam looked at the tree, "I can't see it, I guess it ain't nothing but an old squirrel. Maybe a black snake done got it." They look around there and a black snake had bit the squirrel.

White man looked and said, "If Sam is psychic, I'ma make some money off of that." So he said, "Sam, I'ma get all the people out here and next week we gonna get something, and you gonna tell us what it is."

So the white man went and bet up all his property, saying Sam could tell them anything they want. So the one guy, he betted him. He said, "I tell you what. I know thing you can't guess." So he went down

got a steel box, then he caught a buzzard. The put the buzzard under the box.

So the white man said, "In the morning, Sam, you got to tell us what's in that box, or my land's up against it." Sam said, "All right, boss." But Sam knew he wasn't psychic, he was just guessing. He eased out of the house 'bout four o'clock in the morning, went and peep under the box. Then he went back to bed. That morning he woke up 'bout ten o'clock. Sam come on out. "What's in the box there, Sam." Sam said, "Humm, I don't know. Lord, let me see now. Size of the box, I guess you got a buzzard under there." "Sure is. Sure is psychic, ain't he?"

Guy said, "I'ma get you. Next week I'ma put something under that box, see if you guess it." "All right, captain." So that next Friday night, came out, put a coon under the box. Sam got up 'bout four o'clock, eased out of the house. The guy had two policemen sitting on the box. Sam couldn't see what was under that one. Sam went back in the house, back to bed. White man came 'round, said, "Sam, if you don't win in the morning, I'm broke. Out of business. I'm ruined. And if you don't say what's under that box tomorrow," he said, "you just one hung child." Now Sam was scared.

So morning came, they woke Sam up 'bout ten o'clock. Sam came outside, he scratched his head, he looked at the box, looked at the people. Guy whispered to his friend, "He'll never guess there's a coon under there." Sam said, "Well, captain, you all finally got the old coon." So he went free just by saying that.

(13)

### Dreaming Contest

Another Marster-John type story. As is usual in this kind of story, there is a duel of wits, with the Negro sometimes winning, sometimes losing. This kind of story developed into the much more overt protest tales that follow--such as the Negro, Chinaman, Jew jokes, and the ones about Harlem Negroes in the South. Dorson prints a text of this, (NTPB), 95. He notes that Baughman lists motif K 66 as "Dream Contests." See also PTFLS, 21:89-90. Dorson further notes that the joke is usually a contest between Indian and white man and refers to his article on the subject, SFQ, 10:22.

White fellows, they was sitting down at the club in the South. This only colored guy in there now. They let him 'cause he had millions. Land, property, homes, factories, cars. So he told these fellows, "I bet you a thousand dollars you can't cheat him out of no money." Fellow



said, "Shit, I cheat anybody I want out of some money. Give me two weeks." "All right."

Went over to the colored fellow, he said, "They tell me you're a gambling man." Said, "I'm a gambling man." He said, "Well, let's play a game called 'dream.'" "How it go?" He said, "Whatever I dream, you got to make it come true." He said, "All right."

So at night, 'bout two o'clock, white man walked over, knocked on the door. He said, "Mr. John." "Yeah, what's the matter." He said, "Last night I dreamt that you gave me your wife, your house, all your property." He said, "Well, I got to make it come true."

So the next morning, he had to move to hotel. Next night, the white man came to his apartment, he said, "John." "Yeah, what's the matter?" "You know I dreamt last night that you gave me all your money, your factory, all your stock, all your bonds, all of anything you got of any value." Colored fellow said, "I got to make it come true. This cat is getting slick. He's trying to break me. I got to think this over."

He went out to the woods, sat down on a log by the stream. He thought and he thought. It came to him. He broke out for town. Boy he was running. He ran up to Mr. Charlie's door, nearly knocked down his door. Said, "Come on downstairs, man. Look here, I was sitting in the woods and I fell asleep. And I had a nightmare. I didn't have a dream. I had a nightmare. I dreamt you gave me all my money, all my land, all my belongings, all my stocks and bonds, all my valuables, everything you dreamt I gave you, you gave back to me. Then I turned around and dreamt you gave me everything you had, clothes and money, stocks and bonds, everything. Then I fell asleep and dreamt that we don't dream no god damn more."

(13)

### He Gets What He Orders

Belligerence takes the place of guile in the following stories concerning commerce between white and Negro.

Remind me of the time, this here guy was down South. He was from New York. He was the kind of guy, he didn't care about nothing from nobody. There were these two guys in front of him you know at this Mississippi store. Guy at stop at the filling station. He said, "I want some cigarettes." "If you what?" "If you please, Mr. Charlie."

The guy in front of him said, "Could I have some hot-dogs please, sir." The store man looked over at him and said, "If you what?" He said, "If you please, Mr. Charlie." "All right, then."

So this here city slicker, you know, he didn't pay them no mind. He walked up to the counter, you know. He said, "Look here, throw me a pack of them Pall Malls right there, will you?" "If you what?" "If you got 'em, motherfucker, now what?"

(17)

### He Gets the Tank Filled

This fellow, you know, came down South. And you know it was in this town, you know, it was prejudiced. He rolled in, had one of these big, long Cadillacs, one of these \$400 suits thrown on, diamond rings. A colored fellow. When he ran on up, white fellow sitting down chewing tobacco. "Fill the tank, will you, chief?" "You talking to me, boy?" "Yeah, I'm talking to you." "You know where you at, son?" "Yeah, I know where I'm at." He said, "Well down here, you say 'mister' and you say it snappy, you hear." "Now I don't say 'mister' to nobody." He said, "You see that bush out there 'bout two hundred yards? Fly on top of it." He said, "I see it." So the old white fellow reached up and pulled the trigger, blew the fly clear off the bush. Didn't even touch the bush. He said, "That's what happens when you don't say 'mister,' boy."

He said, "Well, you trying to show off? You got a saucer on you?" "Yeah, I got a saucer." "Throw it in the air." This old fellow throwed the saucer in the air, other fellow reach in the car, got an apple, throwed it in the air, took a straight razor, whipped it out, 'fore the apple hit the ground, peeled, cut the core out, sliced it up so thin that it land in the saucer, hit the ground, it was apple sauce. White fellow jumped up, and said, "What you want, Sonny?" "Just regular."

(13)

### I Didn't Die Right

This is built upon the basic structure of the ghost story of staying in the haunted house as a fear test (H 1411, E 281). It has an unusual ending for this type, however. It is seldom that one being tested wins with such bravado.

There was once a haunted house, where nobody would go in the house because it was haunted. So this one day they put a reward up for anybody who could spend a night in the house. These three guys were willing to spend a night in the house. So they heard a voice howling out:

I didn't die right.  
I didn't die right.

So he got up and he started to run. Ran out. Next guy went in, heard a voice:

I didn't die right.  
I didn't die right.

He got up and ran out. Third man went in. He had his knife at his side. He heard a voice:

I didn't die right.  
I didn't die right.

He simply replied, "Fuck with me and you will die right."

(20)

### Too Much Grief

This is another common ghost story among American Negroes. For other texts, see Dorson (NTPB); JAF, 40:270 (Ala.); SFQ, 18:130 (Ala.); Tidwell, 132 (from SFQ). It is a facet in the large group of stories about those who dress up a ghost in order to scare someone. The most common of these stories among American Negroes is the one in which Marster scares John for praying for death insisently. See Jones, 66-8, for an early reporting of this type story.

This lady and this man, their son just when he got to be twenty-one years old, he was in a gang-fight and he got killed. So every night they prayed. "If I could only see Junior one more time. Please, Lord, let me see him one more time." They prayed loud. Two, three hours.

So the fellow that lived on the third floor, he couldn't ever sleep. "Now if I hear them praying tonight," he told his old lady, "I'ma put on a sheet. I'm walk down there and stop all this. If they think they see their son, maybe they'll stop all this noise." She said, "That's a good idea."

So that night 'bout eight o'clock they started praying. "Just let me see Junior one more time. Please let me see Junior." So about twelve o'clock he decided to put his sheet on. He walked down and knocked on the door. Tap, tap. She said, "Paw, did you hear that?" Dad said, "I didn't hear nothing. Keep on praying." Tap, tap. She said, "Paw, Junior's knocking." Said "Ain't nobody come back from the dead, woman. That ain't Junior." So she said, "See who's at the door." So he said, "Maw. It's meeee." "That's Junior, Paw." "Don't you open that door, woman. Don't you open that door." There he was, guy tied up, you know, with sheet over his head. Looked just like a ghost. Hallway was dark. She said, "Junior, you come back." He said, "Yes, Maw." She said, "Don't he look good, Paw?" He looked at him, he said, "Yes, you look good, son." He said, "You look good, son, now go on back." Pop kept on backing up. Junior kept a-coming gowards him. He said, "You look good, boy, now go on back." He kept a-walking. Pop kept backing up. He said, "You look good, son, now go on back, will you?" So he walked over and touched Pop on the shoulder. He said, "Dad." Pop said, "That's why your mother-fucking ass is dead now. You're so god-damned hard-headed."

(13)

### The Coldest Day

The next few pages will be made up of boasts and exaggerations. As such they all fit into motif section X 1600. It is with the boast that we have the greatest connecting link with the proverb and other shorter verbal forms. It is impossible to draw the line where a boast is a tale and where it is a proverb, so I have included them all in this chapter. The first is obviously a story. After that they descend from conversational gambits to one-liners.

I'll tell you about the coldest day. It was in '58, look ahere, it was colder than nine icebergs. I was standing on this corner, and I only had this short jacket on, and it was cold, and the wind was blowing about 215 miles an hour. And the snow was falling, sleet was dropping, the rain was drizzling. Now you know it was cold. I was standing up on Broad and Market. I was going to New York that weekend of all weekends. The busses kept zooming by and zooming by, zoom. I never seen the Greyhound bus. So all of a sudden this big grey bus stopped. "Say, chief, you waiting for a bus?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, this is the Greyhound bus stop." I said, "Well, there ain't no Grey-

hound bus here." He said, "Well, this is a Greyhound bus, get on." I said, "No, it ain't." He said, "Yes, it is." I said, "It's not." He said, "Why you say that?" I said, "Well, the Greyhound is got a dog on the side of the bus." It was cold. After awhile the window flew up and a dog put his head out, said, "Shit, cold as it is out there, I better come in here."

(13)

I used to be bad. I can remember a time I took a short stick and beat a cat down so low that he had to reach up to tie his shoes. That's no lie. I put my nose to a guy's face that weight 240 pounds, on a Wednesday and told him he better not move till Thursday morning. But I don't know what he said. I hung up.

(13)

I was fighting a guy in the ring and I swung at him with a straight right and missed. And the wind was so strong that the breeze gave his manager pneumonia and he died.

(13)

On top of that I'm fast. Yeah, I'm fast. I'm so fast, a girl told me one time, she said, "Kid, now if you can get some cock 'fore my mother get back home, and she's coming 'round the corner now, you can have it." So I said, "Lay down." She layed down, I pushed the light switch, got undressed, jumped in bed, busted two nuts, got dressed and got outside the room before that room got dark.

(13)

I've seen it so hot that a man was driving his horse and carriage by a field, and it was so hot the corn was popping, and the horses dropped dead thinking it was snowing.

(30)

I've seen it so hot that when hens layed, they came out hard-boiled. (X 1623)

(8)

I've seen it so cold that a nigger talked and it took him two weeks to thaw out the words. (X 1623.2.1)

I've seen it so dark that I was in my room and I heard a knock on the door. You know who it was? A raindrop asking me for a match so he could see how to hit the ground.

(30)

I've seen a man so fast that he was getting some water at the well and the bottom fell out the bucket and he went in the house and got another bucket and caught the water before it hit the ground. (X 1740)

When I was young, I could run a rabbit down in a fast-footed race.

(7)

I'm so broke, I couldn't buy a crippled crab a crutch if I had a forest of small trees.

(14)

I'm so broke I could buy a dick a derby, and that's a small fit.

(14)

I'm so broke I couldn't buy a mosquito a wrestling jacket, and that's a small fit.

(14)

My soles are so thin that if I stepped on a dime I could tell whether it's heads or tails.

(30)

I'm so hungry my backbone is almost shaking hands with my stomach.

(14)

I'm so hungry I could see a bow-legged biscuit walk a crooked mile.

(14)

I'm so broke, if they were selling Philadelphia for a penny, I'd have to run, afraid they would sell it to the wrong person.

(30)

### The Big Watermelon

Some of the best of the boasts have become associated with the Texas jokes. This is one of that type. This might fit either motif X 1411.1 (Lie: the great melon) or K 1420 (Lies about vegetables).

Fellow from Texas, he was telling how big Texas was. "In Texas, we got miles and miles and miles. Nothing but miles and miles and miles. Well partner, I tell you, in Texas, when you get up in the morning, comb your hair, stick your comb down on the ground and you strike oil. Yes, suh."

So this Southern fellow said, "Well, has you all been up in New York?" "New York?" "Partner, New York is just the northeast side of Texas. That's all it is now." He said, "Gee whiz, wow, that's a big watermelon over there. Must be about fifteen feet in diameter. Must weigh a good bit. Ooh, it's a big watermelon." So the Southern fellow said, "You all talking about that cucumber laying there?"

(13)

### The Drunk Does Pushups

Jokes about drunks are legion. Many are to be heard among the Camingerly residents. Thompson leaves a whole section for stories about drunks, though he does not include many references within the section (X 800). I include here two representative stories.

This here sailor, he got drunk. So he was going to the bar, there was 'nother sailor already in there. So the guy said, "Er uh, you can't get nothing to drink, 'cause you're drunk." He said, "No, I'm not drunk. I know what I'm doing. I can do some pushups, far as that's concerned." So the guy said, "O.K., lemme see you do twenty-five pushups." So this here comes this other drunk sailor. "Give me a drink." "You can't have nothing to drink in here, you're too drunk." He said, "You think I'm drunk. Loot at that guy. He don't even know his girl left him."

(17)

### The Drunk Goes Around to the Side Door

Well, you know how sailors is. Sailors, they get drunk all the time. Well this here sailor, he went in the bar, er uh, guy said, "What

would you like?" So he stayed in there and he got drunk. Tried to go to another bar. Guy put him out. So he went 'round the side door. Guy kicked him in the mouth and threw him out on his ass. Still wasn't satisfied. He go around the back and come in. Guy beat him up, threw him out again. Get up off the ground, brush his clothes off. Brush his hat off. Walked right back 'round the front and come back in. So the guy said, "Didn't I..." He said, "Hold it. God damn it, you don't own every bar in town now." (He thought he was going in different bars.)

(17)

### Down Under the Tree

You know this little girl, she lived in the country. She wasn't no little girl. 'Bout seventeen years old. Now her father and her uncle had a farm, but her uncle died and left three-fourths of the farm to her that when she was beturned seventeen she could do anything she wanted with it. Well, she was seventeen now. Now the farmer next door, he had a nice little young boy. He was nineteen. Very nice little boy. Little girl was stone in love with him, but he never said nothing to her. His father wanted the land of this little girl, but her father wouldn't sell it to him.

So the little boy was down by the lake one day. She called and she said, "Tommy." He said, "Yeah. What you want? Why you always bother me." She said, "I just want you to talk to me." "I don't want to talk to you." She said, "Well, look. Will you come over and kiss me, please?" "No, I ain't gonna kiss you." "I'll give you \$100." "All right, I'll kiss you and that's all." She said, "All right." He kissed her. She gave him \$100 and he went on home.

Father said, "Where you been, son?" "I been down there playing. Little girl from across the road, she came over bothering me. Give me \$100 just to kiss her. She crazy." He said, "You kiss her, son?" "Yeah, I kissed her." "All right."

Next day he goes down. She comes, says, "Tommy." "What you want now?" "Feel my titties, play with my stomach." "For what?" "I'll give you \$500." "That's all I'ma do then." "All right." She paid him, he went on home. "What you do today, sonny?" "I was down there playing, little girl asked me to feel her titties, play with her stomach. She gave me \$500. And I did it, so she gave me \$500. But that's all I did." Father said, "Umm, you going down there tomorrow?" "Yes, sir." "All right."

So his father jumped up that morning, eased down to the woods, jumped up in a tree 'bout where they play at. So the little girl come



down there playing. Tommy come down. She said, "Tommy, come over here." Took off her little panties. "Do it to me?" "No." She said, "I'll give you \$1,000." "All right. That's all I'ma do. Just gonna put it in." "All right." He put it in, got ready to get up. She said, "Tommy, don't get up now. Just move a little bit." "No, I ain't gonna move a little bit." Father up in the tree, he's looking down listening to all the conversation. She said, "You know that land your father's been wanting?" "Yeah, what about it?" She said, "If you move one more time I give it to you. You know that house your father's been wanting that's on my land?" "Yeah." "You move two more times and I add that in. You know that orange grove over there your father's been wanting?" "Yeah." "You move three more times and I throw that in." She said, "I got two million dollars. Now if you work real easy and take your time for 'bout an hour and a half, give that to you, too." Father said, "Go on, son, shake ass, son, shake ass."

(13)

### Two Parables

You know these two bulls were standing upon the field, you know, way up on the hill. Down in the valley was a whole lot of cows. Now, the young bull looked at the old bull—you know this old bull he had been in the bullfighting ring in his day and he was a very old bull—so the young bull he was spry, jumping around and healthy, all full of pep. He said, "Look here, old bull, let's run down in the valley and fuck a few of those cows." Old bull looked at him and said, "Son, if you take your time, we walk down, we might fuck 'em all."

(13)

You know this young dog was standing there talking to the old dog. He said, "Young dog, you ain't been out in the world yet, is you?" Dog said, "No, sir." He said, "I'ma show you what life there is out here." He said, "All right." "Everything I do, you just come along behind me and do the same thing." "Yes, sir."

So the dogs they walked out and walked down the street, and old dog got to a pole, smelt the pole, cocked the leg, and he peed on it. So young dog cocked his leg and peed. So they walked along and old dog came to a car. He walked around the car, he looked at it, smelt the car, cocked his leg up, and he peed on that. So the young dog, he walked up, smelt the car, cocked his leg up, and he peed on it. The old dog he

walked down to the garbage can, looked over the side, got himself a bone and ate it. The young dog, he walked over to the garbage can, looked over the side, got himself a bone. So they walked on for maybe ten or fifteen minutes, they saw a she-dog. Old dog smelt her, kissed her, walked around, jumped up on her, knocked himself off a piece out. So, the young dog he walked up to her, kissed her and he smelt her, jumped up on her, knocked himself a piece out.

So they went back on down, you know, to the yard. Old dog said, "Well, son, how you like the world?" He said, "It's complicated." "What you mean?" He said, "Well now, er uh, we went down, walked, came to a pole, smelt the pole, then we peed on it. Came to a car, we looked it over, smelt the car, and peed on that. Then we walked down, seen a girl, kissed her, and even smelled her. Then we did it to her. That was all right. Even when we went to the garbage can, got something to eat. I guess it was all right. But what's the basis of being out in the world? I don't see no future in it." He said, "Well, son, take the advice of an old dog. Anything in this world that you can't smell, eat, kiss, or fuck, piss on it."

## CHAPTER NINE

### PROVERBS

It takes more than the occasional jottings that I did to make a proper collection and analysis of the proverbs of a community. First, of all, you must get used to the speech-ways of the members of the group before you can know what is proverbial and what isn't. Then you have to indulge in much conversation with your ears tuned for the proverbial alone. I was not with this group long enough to do more than to begin to have a feeling for their mode of speech, and when I did get some index into these matters, I never spent very much time tuning in for them alone. What are represented here then are verbal expressions which I have noted as possibly proverbial, but jotted in haste while in the midst of collecting other material, or of just talking. The ones which I noted in many cases are those common to Anglo-American tradition, as those are the ones which I recognized most easily.

I collected many of this sort, and many of the same sort, ones which embody some sort of a summing-up of wisdom applicable to a recurrent situation. For the most part, however, the phrases and sentences which kept reoccurring were not of this sort at all. They were, rather, conversational gambits, phrases which might be considered proverbs under a wide definition of the term. For the sake of clarity, and for those who more closely define proverbs, I have divided the two

types. The ones which are included first are those which embody some common expression which encompasses some element of knowledge in aphoristic form. The ones under conversational cliches are those of the other sort. It is this latter type that I most often encountered. The ones in the first type I usually ran into but once; the second, many times. It is this type expression that is encountered within the confines of the toast and joke, though most of the ones found there are not included in this list. Even when the Negroes of the community used common proverbs, they were often turned for comic effect. The old proverb of "an apple a day" becomes a comic dialogue. "You can't get blood out of a turnip, but you can send old Turnip to jail" is a similar change.

#### Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases

1. An apple a day keeps the doctor away.  
An onion a day keeps everyone away. (30)
2. Red as an apple. Taylor, 68; Taylor and Whiting, 7-8.
3. Straight as an arrow. Taylor, 78; Taylor and Whiting, 9.
4. Silly as an ass.
5. Fat as a butter ball. Taylor, 40; Taylor and Whiting, 49  
(butter); Oxford, 193.
6. Big as a balloon. Taylor, 16.

7. Holler like a banshee.
8. Blind as a bat. Taylor, 19; Taylor and Whiting, 18; Oxford, 50.
9. Like a bat out of hell.
10. Busy as a bee. Taylor, 22; Taylor and Whiting, 22; Oxford, 50.
11. Red as a beet. Taylor, 68; Taylor and Whiting, 24.
12. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.  
Taylor and Whiting, 27; Oxford 44-5.
13. The early bird catches the worm.
14. Blind in one eye, can't see out of the other.
15. Blood is thicker than water.  
Taylor and Whiting, 33; Oxford, 51-2.
16. Brave as a bull.
17. He don't know where his butter lies.  
See Taylor and Whiting, 41; Oxford, 61.
18. Cute as a button. Taylor, 31.
19. Have your cake and eat it, too.  
Taylor and Whiting, 41; Oxford, 61, Taylor, 27.
20. Burning the candle at both ends.
21. Quick as a cat. Taylor, 65.
22. Grin like a Cheshire cat.  
Taylor, 25; Taylor and Whiting, 66; oxford, 267-8.
23. Don't count your hatch before your chickens lay.  
Taylor and Whiting, 67; Oxford, 112.
24. If all men was as to their country as they are to their wives,  
goodbye country.
25. Cool as a cucumber Taylor, 29; Taylor and Whiting, 86-7.
26. You look like death going around the corner to get a life-saver.

27. Fresh as dishwater.
28. You bite my dog, I<sup>'</sup>ma bite your cat.
29. That's why a dog has so many friends. He wags his tail and keeps his mouth shut.
30. Slippery as an eel. Taylor, 74; Taylor and Whiting, 117.
31. No matter how high is a feather, he's gonna come down.
32. Hot as a firecracker. Taylor, 50.
33. A fish would never get caught if he kept his mouth shut.
34. You can catch more flies with sugar than you can with vinegar.  
Taylor and Whiting, 140.
35. Sly as a fox. Taylor, 74; Taylor and Whiting, 145.
36. Nutty as a fruitcake. Taylor, 59.
37. Good as gold Taylor, 44; Taylor and Whiting, 155.
38. What's good for the goose is candy for the gander.
39. As sure as grits is groceries and eggs is Mona Lisa. (answering an emphatic no to a question)
40. Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.
41. Haste makes waste. Oxford, 132.
42. Like Heaven dropping down.
43. Scarce as hen's teeth.  
Taylor, 70.
44. Crazy as a horse.
45. Hungry as a horse. Taylor and Whiting, 192. (ate like)
46. Giggle like a hyena. Taylor and Whiting, 196. (laugh)
47. He shakes like jelly on the plate. (He's fat.)  
Taylor, 52; Taylor and Whiting, 203.
48. Silly as a kid.
49. High as a kite. Taylor, 48; Taylor and Whiting, 209.
50. Better late than never.  
Taylor and Whiting, 215; Oxford, 40.

51. I laugh, joke and smoke, but I don't play.
52. He who lies will steal.
53. As long as there's life, there's hope.  
Taylor and Whiting, 220; Oxford, 366.
54. Faster than greased lightning.  
Taylor and Whiting, 139; Oxford, 221.
55. A half a loaf is better than none.  
Taylor and Whiting, 167-8; Oxford, 271.
56. Crazy as a loon. Taylor, 31; Taylor and Whiting, 228.
57. Make love to Miss Lily White. (Go to bed.)
58. Skinny as a macaroni.
59. A miss is as good as a mile.  
Taylor and Whiting, 246; Oxford, 427.
60. Slow as molassas in January.  
Taylor, 74.
61. Money's no object. It's just a problem.
62. You talk like a monkey eating garlic. (It stinks.)
63. Making a mountain out of a molehill.  
Taylor and Whiting, 252; Oxford, 436.
64. Weak as a mouse.
65. Stubborn as a mule. Taylor, 79.
66. Soft as mush.
67. As hard as nails. Taylor, 46.
68. More gall than a nannygoat.
69. You're my nigger if you don't grow no bigger. (1)
70. Cutting off your nose to spite your face.  
Taylor and Whiting, 263-4; Oxford, 126.
71. Too old to cut the mustard.
72. Hot as a forty-coke oven in hell.  
Taylor, 50.
73. Wise as an owl. Taylor, 89.

74. Dumb as an ox. Taylor, 37.
75. Strong as an ox. Taylor, 79; Taylor and Whiting, 273.
76. Pretty as a picture. Taylor, 64; Taylor and Whiting, 283.
77. Fat as a pig. Taylor, 40; Taylor and Whiting, 283.
78. Look at the kettle calling the pot black.  
Taylor and Whiting, 293; Oxford, 512-13.
79. He who steals my purse steals trash, but he who steals my good name  
steals great riches.
80. The more rain, the more grass.  
The more grass, the more ass. (See "Juneteenth," PTFLS, 10:22)
81. In Rome, do like the Romans.  
Taylor and Whiting, 310; Oxford, 547.
82. Dumb as shit and half as nasty.
83. You ought to be shot for shit and hung for stinking.
84. Signification is the nigger's occupation.
85. Signifying is worse than dying.
86. Slowly but surely. Taylor and Whiting, 339; Oxford, 579.
87. Slow as a snail. Taylor, 74; Taylor and Whiting, 340.
88. Soft as silk. Taylor, 76.
89. You're my squirrel if you don't never crack a nut. (1)
90. As sharp as a tack. Taylor, 72.
91. Good things come in small packages.
92. What goes up must come down.
93. Still waters run deep.  
Taylor and Whiting, 394; Oxford, 621.
94. Like white on rice. (quickly or hard)
95. When you're white, you're right.  
When you're brown, stick around.  
When you're black, get back.
96. As smart as a whip. Taylor, 75.



97. Where there's a will, there's a way.  
Taylor and Whiting, 402; Oxford, 710.
98. Quick as a wink. Taylor, 66; Taylor and Whiting, 406.
99. She must have woke up on the wrong side of the bed.  
Taylor and Whiting, 21-2; Oxford, 544.
100. A woman has many faults.  
A man has two.  
Everything he say  
And everything he do. (30)
101. A woman is like a candy bar: half sweet, half nuts. (30)
102. Raggedy as a bowl of yok. (Chinese food) (14)

#### Conversational Cliches

1. What's cooking, good looking? (24)
2. Hello good looking. Not you plug ugly. (10)
3. I'm hungry. I'm Bert, glad to meet you, Hungry. (14)
4. Hi, Margaret. I'm not high, I'm stone sober. (18)
5. What's buzzin, cousin? (24)
6. Plant you now, dig you later. (ending phone call) (14)
7. Are you broke? No, but I'm badly bent.
8. Long as I owe you, you'll never be broke.
9. See you, white folks, this nigger just left. (14)
10. I'ma TCB. (take care of business) (14)
11. Search me, only I haven't got pockets. (14)
12. Man, don't point at me. My mother and father ain't dead. (24)
13. (To someone sloppy) This lady lives in a pen. She don't use no ink pen. (10)
14. It's getting late, let's go to bed.

15. (To someone "sounding") Hey, baby, it's a full moon tonight.
16. (To a girl) You know how to do it, cause you're used to it. (24)
17. (Answer) You can say it  
But don't spray it. (24)
18. (To a girl) You can shake it  
But don't break it  
Don't bruise it  
I can use it. (24)
19. (To a liar) Get your lies straight, 'cause you don't cut no  
cheese around here. (14)
20. (To a liar) Do you want to play pussy and get fucked?
21. (To someone acting smart) Why don't you stop lying on your elbows?
22. I thought you was funny but your face beat me to it.
23. Go to hell. That's where your mammy's going.
24. Where are you going? I'm going to hell if I don't pray.
25. Where are you going? I went to hell and the devil wouldn't have me.
26. ...off my rocker.
27. I'm no icebox, I can't keep anything. (14)
28. I want (something) so bad I can taste it.
29. I'ma jump down your throat and knock your tonsils out. (14)
30. If laziness were the Holy Ghost, you'd shout your way to heaven.  
(14)
31. Walking on God's little acres. (walking barefoot)
32. I wouldn't give him the time of day.
33. He hates colored people worse than God hates sin. (31)
34. I would have strung him up and cut him every way but the right way.
35. Before you do it, the devil'll be making ice cream in Hell and hot-  
cross buns in Heaven. (14)
36. Before you do it, the moon'll come over the mountain and the sun  
will shine. (i.e. never) (14)

37. ...run up a storm.
38. I got him under my skin, under my fingernail. When I say jump, he jumps.
39. He has eyes in the back of his head.
40. You heard me, you're not blind.
41. You seen me, you're not deaf.
42. Have you ever seen a rabbit throw a snowball? (in response to a foolish question) (4)
43. Can Porky the Pig see his ass? (in response to a foolish question)
44. That'll be a blue moon in a yellow sky. (improbability) (4)
45. Hell will freeze and the Devil will go ice-skating. (4)
46. You won't believe that shit stinks until you smell it.
47. You have more sense than people.
48. You wouldn't take a job biting holes in doughnuts.
49. You'd draw a gun on work and shoot hell out of payday.
50. You wouldn't work on a pie-boat, floating down a lemonade river.
51. He run out of his shoes.
52. If I'm lying, I want God to paralyze me. (3)
53. I might as well hand it to you like it is.
54. You don't wear two hats. (aren't hypocritical) (1)
55. What are you, a man or a mouse?
56. He's a grinning Jacob.
57. She didn't even say "Dog have some." (she didn't offer any) (14)

## CHAPTER TEN

### FOLK BELIEFS

The majority of these superstitions and charms and cures were collected from the older members of the community, especially Sam Stogie and Eula. Even from them they were given as something that used to work in the country but, they would hasten to say, not as good as doctors can do today. They did not want to seem to be out of touch with the times. Thus, for the most part, these are no longer a part of the lives of the Negroes of this city.

Yet, this is not to say that belief in magical presence has disappeared by any means. There are two herb shops in the neighborhood which seem to do a landoffice business in roots, charms, and books which tell you how to read the stars. Bad luck omens are still greatly feared, but there are not so many of them as there used to be (after all, who can hear a horse neighing at night anymore). Perhaps the most persistent of the folk beliefs are the portents, my younger informants often passing on the same information in these matters as the older ones.

Many of the younger members of the community still harbor some belief in supernatural magic. Gamblers look for good luck charms, numbers players look constantly for signs that will indicate the day's number. Sissy, after being convinced that we would not scoff told us about a friend of hers who had a hole in her ear that allowed her to see the dead, and told us many stories to that effect. And if there was ever a thunderstorm in the area, you would never see a light on in the area (the solemnizing of the early warnings from electric companies that

if lightning struck and your lights were on they would blow out. Now it is "God speaking."

Mrs. Jackson, the most pious of the Camingerly residents, seemed to have transferred all the powers of black magic over to the side of God. Incantations were replaced by prayer, but the effect was the same. If someone infuriated her in any way, she would get down on her hands and knees and place a curse on the offender in the name of God. Miss Zecca, a local real estate agent, who was notoriously anti-Negro, incurred Mrs. Jackson's hatred for her views, and Eugenia got down on her knees and prayed that Miss Zecca would not be able to rent her houses for two years, and she swears that this came true until she lifted her prayer. This was before we moved into the neighborhood, so I cannot testify to the efficacy of this method, but I carefully attempted to stay on the best side of Mrs. Jackson.

The lore that is presented here is, for the most part, of a piece with Southern Negro lore. It would be virtually impossible to indicate the variety of places in which similar beliefs are recorded, as a great many of them are of world-wide distribution. Wayland Hand's Dictionary, when it is issued will greatly simplify these matters, but until then the researcher is at a loss for the proper tools. I have felt that it was enough to give reference to the two major collections of such customs among the Negroes of the South: Puckett's Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro and Browne's Popular Beliefs and Superstitions from Alabama. The latter book gives cross-references to items in Dr. Hand's editing of the belief section of The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore, a book which has not yet been issued, so

where there was such a reference to a belief which is contained here, I have included the reference, in hopes that there is a correlation in method between that work and Dr. Hand's dictionary.

1. If you dream about fish, someone you know is pregnant.  
Browne, 8; Puckett, 501-2.
2. Boys lay to the left side before they are born, girls to the right. (9, 7, 11) Browne, 34, 35.
3. Skin marks caused on babies because of frustrated cravings during pregnancy. The marks will look like food craved. (9, 11)
4. Usually have baby quickest on full moon. (9)
5. Rub castor oil on mole of head and bottom of feet of baby to cure cold. (7) See Browne, 148 (tallow).
6. You can take a child's cold away by breathing the cold in, but only if you don't have a cold yourself. (29)  
See Browne, 400-08; Brown, 412-15.
7. Rub castor oil on mole of head and bottom of feet to loosen baby's bowels. (7)
8. If a baby has hiccups, put two straws, crossed in his hair. (29)  
Puckett, 372.
9. Worms in child, rub navel with turpentine nine times around and they will come out. (7)  
See Browne, 442.
10. Cure asthma by putting raw potatoes next to body and bandage and sweat. (7)
11. To cure chicken pox kill a black hen and rub the blood on body. (7)  
Browne, 719.
12. To cure chicken pox put the child in the chicken-house. (7)  
Puckett, 386.
13. If you have a cold, make a grease of mud and tallow and put it on chest. (7)
14. To cure a cold, drink catnip tea. (7)
15. To cure a cold, drink boiled pine tops. (7)  
Brown, 1115; Browne, 789.
16. To cure a cold, put cottonseed oil on feet and chest. (7)
17. Cooked greens, boiled, rub legs with the juice, will cure cripples. (7)
18. To cure measles make a tea out of sheep grass, or sheep shit. (7)

19. The cure for mumps is to rub the marrow of hog jaw on the glands. Don't bite anything salty or sour. (7)  
Brown, 1828; Browne, 1375; Puckett, 387.
20. Fish grease rubbed on the swollen gland will cure mumps. (29)  
Browne, 1377.
21. For poison ivy, mix fresh milk and salt. (7)  
Browne, 1472 (butter from milk in May from cow which has run wild in woods).
22. For scarlet fever, take tea made from peach tree leaves. (7)
23. A snake will die after it bites you. It will search for its weed to die on. Find the weed before he gets back to it and rub it on the bite. (7) See Brown, 2155; Browne, 1622.
24. To cure a snake bite, spit tobacco juice on the bite. (7)
25. If you are bitten by a snake, you can suck the poison out, but only if you don't have any decayed teeth. (9)  
Brown, 2124; 1599.
26. For insect bite, especially a spider, cover it with tobacco juice. (11)  
Browne, 1735, 1739, 1742, 1744; Brown, 2234, 2251-55.
27. To cure warts, make them bleed, dip three stones in the blood and throw them away. Any three things should work. (7)  
Puckett, 379-80; similar to many in Browne, 1964, 1998-2000.
28. Cure warts (flesh moles) by tying a horsehair around it, and it will saw it off. (9, 11) Browne, 1978; Brown, 2431.
29. To cure whooping cough, drink bull piss. (7)
30. Drink wild cherry bark tea for a tonic in the spring. (7)  
Browne, 793; Browne, 2098.
31. Sassafras tea is good for a spring tonic, the red kind. (7)  
Browne, 2114-16; Brown 895.
32. If your left ear burns, someone is talking ill of you. If your right ear burns, someone is talking well of you.  
Browne, 2166; Brown, 3507, 3509, 3513-17; Puckett, 450.
33. Get ears pierced in full moon. (9)
34. Getting ears pierced improves eyesight. (9, 11)  
Puckett, 382.
35. If nose starts sweating, it is proof of evil intentions.
36. If nose itches, some dog's ass is in danger. (14)
37. If your left eye jumps, you'll get punched in the right eye.  
See Puckett, 449.

38. If your right eye jumps, you'll get mad.  
Browne, 2188 (itches), 2179 (left eye).
39. If your right eye jumps, you will be happy.  
Browne, 2189, Brown, 512.
40. If your left eye jumps you will be cross.  
Brown, 235; Browne, 2179.
41. If you want your hair to grow in evenly you must have it cur during the full moon. (9) See Brown, 1554; Browne, 2216 (faster).
42. If you stump your left toe, you are going to have good luck. If you stump your right toe, bad luck, unless you turn around immediately three times. Browne, 2251; Brown, 621-6; Puckett, 452.
43. Don't take broom when you move. (11)  
Browne, 2259; Brown, 2957.
44. Break a mirror, gives you seven-year itch. (11)  
Browne, 2313; Brown, 3060.
45. Don't take salt when you move. (11)  
See Brown, 2949; Browne, 2267 for opposite.
46. Don't bend broom. (29)
47. If you get hit with a broom, you're going to jail. (11)  
Puckett, 397.
48. If a broom hits you, it is bad luck unless you spit on it. (29, 1)  
Puckett, 397.
49. Find a pin pointing toward you it is good luck. (1, 11)  
Browne, 2532-3; Brown, 3309; Puckett, 495.
50. Find a pin pointing away from you, you are going to have bad luck. (1, 11)  
Browne, 2534, Brown, 3313.
51. Pick up a pin or its bad luck. (29, 9)
52. Don't borrow salt. (9, 11)  
Browne, 2560; Brown, 2886-8.
53. If you spill salt, it is bad luck. You must pick it up and throw it over your left shoulder. (9, 11)  
Browne, 2564; Brown, 2881; Puckett, 442.
54. It is bad luck to walk under a ladder.  
Browne, 2586; Brown, 3064; Puckett, 418.
55. Bad luck to sit on a trunk. (11)  
Puckett, 410.
56. It is bad luck to put a hat on a bed. (1)  
Browne, 2631; Brown, 3238; Puckett, 410.
57. It is bad luck to open an umbrella in the house. (9)  
Browne, 2584; Brown, 3062.
58. If your feet itch, you are going to strange ground. (11)  
Brown, 3712; Browne, 2689; Puckett, 451.



59. Bad luck to turn around after you start. If you have to, draw an X and spit in the middle of it.  
Browne, 2700; Brown, 3771-5; Puckett, 424.
60. It is bad luck for a woman to be the first to walk into a man's house on Monday morning. (6)  
Browne, 2722.
61. If the left side of your nose itches, a woman visitor is coming. If the right side itches, a man is coming.  
Browne, 2777; Brown, 3918.
62. If your nose itches, a visitor is coming.  
Browne, 2772; Brown, 3912.
63. If two people say the same thing at the same time, somebody's coming that is not expected. Browne, 2786; Puckett, 461-2.
64. Drop a dishrag and a hungry visitor is coming (11, 9)  
Browne, 2801; Brown, 4043.
65. Drop a fork and a hungry visitor is coming. (11)  
See Browne, 2803-7; Brown, 4004-9.
66. If your left hand itches you are going to get a letter.  
Browne, 2829-30; Brown, 4111; Puckett, 450.
67. If your palm starts itching, money is on the way.  
Browne, 2883; Brown, 3392.
68. If your ear starts ringing, there is going to be a wedding or a funeral.  
Browne, 3136; Brown, 4910-11; Puckett, 462 (funeral only).
69. If your right hand itches, you are going to get money.  
Browne, 2879; Brown, 3393.
70. Wear your soles out at the toe, spend your money as you go. (1)  
Puckett, 446.
71. A dog howling is a sign of death nearby.  
Browne, 3232-3; Brown, 5209; Puckett, 478.
72. A horse neighing nearby at night means death nearby; probably one of the family.  
Puckett, 478.
73. A dream of a naked woman indicates some man close to you is going to die.  
Browne, 3270; Brown, 4952.
74. If you dream about someone they usually die.
75. If you pick up a plate and it breaks on you, someone is going to die.  
Browne, 3332; Brown, 5289; Puckett, 445.
76. Bad luck for a black cat to cross your path.  
Browne, 3790; Brown, 3813; Puckett, 468-9.
77. If a black cat crosses your path spit at him.  
Browne, 3799; Brown, 3839.
78. If a black cat crosses your path, turn around once immediately to get rid of bad luck. Browne, 3797; Brown, 3825.

79. If you see a black cat at night cross your path, turn around three times and walk back nine steps.  
Puckett, 469.
80. A dream of a snake means an enemy is trying to do you some harm.  
Browne, 3878; Brown, 3614.
81. Dream of clear running water, good luck is coming.  
Browne, 4267; Brown, 3107; Puckett, 501.
82. Dream of muddy running water, bad luck is coming.  
Browne, 4268; Brown, 3108, Puckett, 501.
83. Dream of woman, play 967. (Play that number in numbers "game" that day.)
84. If you dream something and tell it before breakfast, it will come true.  
Browne, 4271; Brown, 3132; Puckett, 496.
85. For good luck, carry a rabbit's foot.  
Puckett, 474.
86. For good luck, find a four leaf clover.  
Puckett, 495.
87. For good luck, tie a ribbon on baby's pillow.
88. For good luck, find a new penny and throw it over shoulder.
89. For good luck, place a horseshoe over the front door.  
Puckett, 467, 77.
90. Catching crab-lice is good luck.
91. Cross your fingers when you want something.
92. For good luck, throw pennies into corner.
93. Black penny is good luck.
94. If you sing in the shower before breakfast, you'll have an argument before dinner.  
Browne, 4316, 18-19; Brown, 2845-7.
95. Don't speak or turn on lights while it is thundering; it is bad luck.
96. Playing solitaire in the house is bad luck.
97. Bad luck to bring peanuts into house or to throw them on pavements.  
Puckett, 414-15.

## GLOSSARY OF UNUSUAL TERMS AND EXPRESSIONS

Included in this section are words from the pieces of folklore that are at all unusual and liable to be misunderstood without some sort of gloss. A cursory attempt has been made to understand the etymology of the words. For the majority of my insights I must thank the research of Peter Tamony, of San Francisco, California, who very kindly sent me some perceptive comments on some of these words and their usage and history.

Bitch Any woman. As used here, usually without usual pejorative connotations. Wentworth and Flexner, 39.

Blashed Knocked, ruined.

Boolhipper Slick black leather coat, usually found, as here, with a belt in the back. Could find no previous references. Pronounced somewhere between hoolhipper and boodlehipper or boodlipper.

Booty As used here, perhaps an extension of body, specifically the body of a woman. Oliver, 189, prints a blues verse in which the word is used in this way. On the other hand, "boot" has had a history of sexual connotation and may have affected the formation of this word. The term, "Buckinger's Boot" meant the cunt in Eighteenth Century England. See Francis Grose, Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue, Second Edition, London, 1788.

Bulldagger A lesbian. It is usually spelled "bullyker" or "bulldiker," and most commonly is shortened to "dike." Tamony reports that a veterinary friend told him that a bulldiker is a cow that could not take the penis of a bull because of an obstruction in the vaginal passage. Reliability problematical. Wentworth and Flexner, 72.

Busted my nuts Had an orgasm.

Camel-hair benny In Eighteenth Century British slang, Joseph meant a coat; c.f. Genesis: coat of many colors and Joseph's cloak left in the grasp of Potiphar's wife. Benjamin was, of course, Joseph's younger brother. In the early Nineteenth Century British slang, Benjamin or Benny came to mean a smaller or close-fitting coat.

Cashmere Any sweater.

Cock This is a strange reversal of denotation. In Negro parlance, it means the female sexual organs, as opposed to the usual reference to those of the male. As such it probably developed as a metaphor for the comb of the cock, or for the position of the penis while in erection. The switch of denotations may, perhaps, be due to the importance of women in the Negro sex game, signifying the reversal of many of the traditional roles. See discussion in Chapter One.

Cooling Doing a cool thing, in other words, performing in complete control of oneself in the midst of a potentially explosive situation. Used much in jazz talk. Obvious derivation: cool as opposite of getting heated up, as in cool as a cucumber, which is found as early as 1732 (Oxford, 109). Wentworth and Flexner, 121.

Crabs Crab lice.

Crazy Good, or highest good in jazz talk. See Wentworth and Flexner, 129.

Crazy Rim Very good looking hat. May simply be descriptive of its good looks, with the addition of designation of the object by one of its parts for the whole (rim for hat).

Cutting Man Best friend. Cut has always been associated with contest of some sort. Cutting cards is a common way of sudden death gambling. Competition between jazz bands has been referred to as cutting. This expression may refer to the one you choose to do the cutting for you, thus someone you trust, thus a friend. Wentworth and Flexner, 136.

Down To place someone at a verbal disadvantage. Used both as a verb and adjective. You can down someone, or you can put someone down. Word may have sexual derivation, in that putting someone underneath you during the sexual act indicates that he is playing the female role, i.e. is by inference a homosexual. This parallels the use of the word mount which means to best someone physically or verbally, but which derives from the expression of animals having intercourse, the male mounting the female.

Dozens See section on this type of rhyme, page 218 ff.

Fag Male homosexual. Wentworth and Flexner, 176, point out that speculation has been that fag meaning homosexual came from fag meaning cigarette in that cigarettes were considered effeminate by pipe and cigar smokers pre-World War I. But fag has meant boy servant or schoolboy in England since before 1830, and the term probably derives ultimately from there. (Fag is for fag-gots or the sticks of wood the boys had to gather.)

Fuck See Jive.

Gig Job, situation. May have sexual origin as gig or gigi means vagina or rectum. A gig may originally have meant a sex date and expanded in meaning to a date of any kind, but usually a playing date for musicians. If sexual originally, much like many other jazz terms, see jazz, jive. Wentworth and Flexner, 214.

Goat-hair Bootleg liquor.

Grinding Sexual intercourse. Descriptive of movement during act. Wentworth and Flexner, 230. The movement used metaphorically in terms of striptease dance. This latter use is not common.

Herbs Marijuana. Probably descriptive of common properties of feel, smell, and texture.

Hung to Very attached to, addicted.

Hustling Making nervous signs at. Very different from common slang sense of the term.

Jazz See Jive.

Jive "A whole lot of talk." Originally and still used in the sense of fuck and jazz, i. e. the sexual act. All three have achieved similar changes, jazz being synonymous with jive in the realm of talk, fuck referring more to actions. Synonyms also: shuck and shive.

Joint Male sex organs.

Lobstertails Some sort of venereal disease, perhaps simply a bad case of crabs.

Main who Best girl friend.

Me and you Short for "There's just me and you and we're going to fight."

Mount See Down.

- Punk Young male companion of homosexual. Wentworth and Flexner, 411 (punk 4). More specialized than usual meaning of young, fresh person.
- Rags Clothes. Used in this sense since 1855. (DAE rags). Wentworth and Flexner, 416.
- Raise Stop, or "hold it." Shortening of the common order to "raise your hands" when pointing a gun at someone, with a more general application.
- Rap Conviction of a crime. Wentworth and Flexner, 419, print a possible derivation, the rap referring to the tap on the shoulder in a police line-up, indicating the implication of the culprit.
- Real down Very good. Real is a synonym of very; down of cool, but only in this one expression. The usual meaning of down is quite different (see above, down).
- Rockets Bullets. Descriptive of shape and speed.
- Sashay Move (usually fast). May come from the dance step, which itself comes from the idea of courting. See Wentworth and Flexner, 443.
- Shive Jive. See Jive above
- Shuck Fuck (mostly sound-alike), usually only in terms of talk and action rather than the sex act. Expression is usually "shuck and shive." See Jive above.
- Signify To imply, goad, beg, boast by indirect verbal or gestural means. A language of implication. This use is quite broadened from that expressed by Wentworth and Flexner, 477, "to pretend to have knowledge; to pretend to be hip, especially when such pretensions cause one to trifle with an important matter." See introduction to the toast of "The Signifying Monkey," page 308.
- Sissy Young homosexual, or effeminate. Derives from sister. Wentworth and Flexner, 478.
- Sound Playing the dozens. Word descriptive of activity. Wentworth and Flexner, 504, give a somewhat broader interpretation of the word. See section on "Playing the Dozens," page 218 ff.
- Stone An adjective or adverb indicating a greater degree of whatever the noun or verb which it modifies originally meant. A "stone sailor" is a sailor who has all a sailor's characteristics. May come from the expressions "stone cold," "stone dead," etc. which took actual attributes from stones as elements of description. "Stone blend" is an early extension that shows such a development of the word as used above.

Stingy brim Small brimmed hat, often of the "pork pie" variety. Name a euphonistic description of object.

Stomped Corruption of stamp, grind under one's foot. Perhaps just a common Negro pronunciation. See Wentworth and Flexner, 522.

Stud Any male, especially one in the know. Obvious sexual origin. Wentworth and Flexner, 526.

Swith Smell (corruption of snuff?)

Tight Good friends.

Tricks A customer for a prostitute. The expression, "How's tricks?" seems somehow related.

Vine A suit of clothing. Name perhaps descriptive of the "hang" of the clothes. Wentworth and Flexner, 565.

## THE INFORMANTS

The short biographies included here are far from the number of people from whom I collected. They are, however, the most significant informants, and the only ones which I could remember, or had recorded, specific pieces of lore which I could specifically assign to them. Not here then are the children from whom I collected so many games. Also not here are the many girls who were playing the jump-rope or hand-clapping games. The ages given are taken in 1959.

(1) Eular Hardy (Eula) Aged around sixty. Mother of thirteen, grandmother of close to forty. Born in South Carolina. Came to Philadelphia in her late teens, after her husband with their first child. Has been married at least three times. Living, as far as one can ascertain, from the proceeds of bootleg liquor which she has made. Thrown in jail twice during my residence. Extremely jovial type. Used many interesting proverbs and knew many cures, but was secretive of her lore as if ashamed of it. Her grandchildren told me she wore a mojo bag.

(2) Constance Eula's daughter. Aged about forty. Very scatter-brained. Numbers writer of the neighborhood sometimes.

(3) Bobby Lewis Constance's son. My best friend in the neighborhood though far from the best informant. Aged seventeen or eighteen. He had taken a trip to Florida, working his way up and back. Though little, he had a conception of himself as a big man. Worked at odd jobs when he could get one. Last word was that he was a collector for the numbers racket and fast achieving status, was about to buy a car and had a girl living with him.

(4) Geraldine Another of Eula's daughters, aged about thirty. Lived with Eula some of the time. Did house work. Fine sense of humor and very bright.

(5) Ernestine (Sissy) Eula's youngest child, aged seventeen. Very pretty and an incorrigible liar. Made up fantastic excuses for her shortcomings. Agent provocateur, loving to stir up gossip interest in



the neighborhood. Delighted in making up a story about one person and then telling it to another, and then going to a third person and telling the same story about the second.

(6) Bill Williams Aged about seventy. Old southern gentleman. No visible means of support. One of the Lombard Street sidewalk set.

(7) Sam Stover (Stogie) Aged about seventy-five. The most resourceful and creative man of the neighborhood. He could fix anything from a broken bike to a broken bone if you called on him to do so. Full of the lore of the old South, in which he had lived most of his life, but too busy most of the time to talk about it.

(8) Harry Aged fifty. No visible means of support. Another of the Lombard Street sidewalk set.

(9) Gladys Norman, our next door neighbor. About twenty-five. Mother of six (one a year) children. Born in Virginia. Came to Philadelphia with her father in her teens.

(10) Chuckie Norman Gladys' oldest son and part-time resident of The Abrahams.

(11) Joanna Woodson Happy mother of six (plus numerous miscarriages). One of the few mothers in the neighborhood legally married.

(12) Woodretta Woodson Oldest child of Joanna and Woody. Wonderfully active and capable child, about nine years old. Not only an excellent informant, but a great help to her mother.

(13) John H. 'Kid' Mike Easily the best of my informants. Aged twenty-seven to thirty. Had been married. Wife had him thrown in jail for non-support and did so regularly. Had been in a hospital for tuberculosis for a short period during our stay. Styled himself alternately as a professional performer and a professional softball player. Born and raised in Philadelphia.

(14) Bert Aged about eighteen. Married while we lived in Camingerly area. Used very vivid language.

(15) Teddy Bert's brother. Ran a parking lot on Lombard Street. Age, about twenty.

(16) Charley Williams Good friend of Bobby. They took the trip to Florida together. Excellent (professional) singer, arranger, joke and toast teller.

(17) Margaret Edith's niece, Bert's cousin, married to Petey. Eighteen years old, mother of two. Remembered every bit of child lore she ever heard, I think, and taught it to her numerous younger cousins who surrounded her life.

- (18) Petey Aged sixteen, Married to Margaret.
- (19) Freddie Friend of Petey. Aged about eighteen.
- (20) Lydia 'Momma' Burton Grandchild of Eula; aged eight or nine. She lived outside the neighborhood but came visiting often. The best of the child informants.
- (21) Norman Grandson of aged resident, Alice. Lives in West Philadelphia but came visiting Alice for two weeks in the Summer of 1958.
- (22) Cookie Aged eleven.
- (23) Charles Alexander Aged twelve to thirteen. Aspiring artist.
- (24) Richard Eula's grandson, friend of Charles.
- (25) Victor, Jay Roy, Boots Members of a quartet that would practice at the house. Ages sixteen to nineteen. Victor is now in jail in Virginia for murder.
- (26) Javester Aged twenty or twenty-one. Friend of Bobby. Had lived with the same girl for four years. One child. Constantly in search of work.
- (27) Arthur Snells Aged twenty or twenty-one. Friend of Bobby. Learned how to do "processing" and made perennial visits to the South to make money doing this.
- (28) Alice About twenty-five. No visible means of livelihood. Jolly and rotund, known as a joke teller. Unmarried and as far as I observed lived with another girl, though men did visit quite a lot.
- (29) Frederic Douglas Around sixty. The man of distinction of the neighborhood. Born and raised in Washington, D.C., of a professional family. Worked as a mechanic for many years. Very well spoken. Full of religious aphorisms. Capable of long recitations.
- (30) Mrs. Eugenia Jackson Around sixty. Ardent church leader and healer. Born in South Carolina of West Indian mother (She said Spanish but when she gave imitations of her way of talking, it was obviously West Indian) and Negro father. Traveled all around the country with her husband, Charles Jackson, who was a blind street singer. She claimed (unsubstantiated) that he had written and recorded many songs.
- (31) Edith Teddy and Bert's mother. Aged about sixty.
- (32) Dickey Geraldine's son, aged about eleven.
- (33) Richard About twelve or thirteen. Eula's grandson by a daughter living outside the neighborhood who I never met.